LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
NOV 28 1914
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Division SEC
Section 2299
V.1

LIBRARY
NOV 8 1914
THEOLOGICAL SEMIN

THE Moral Philoſopher.

IN A DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

Philalethes a Chriſtian *Deiſt*,

AND

Theophanes a Chriſtian *Jew*.

IN WHICH

The Grounds and Reaſons of RELIGION in general, and particularly of CHRISTIANITY, as diſtinguiſh'd from the Religion of Nature; the different Methods of conveying and propoſing Moral Truths to the Mind, and the neceſſary Marks or Criteria on which they muſt all equally depend; the Nature of poſitive Laws, Rites and Ceremonies, and how far they are capable of Proof as of ſtanding perpetual Obligation; with many other Matters of the utmoſt Conſequence in Religion, are fairly conſidered, and debated, and the Arguments on both Sides impartially repreſented.

ELIHU in JOB xxxii. 8.

There is Reaſon in Man, and the Inſpiration of the Almighty giveth him Underſtanding.

The SECOND EDITION, Corrected.

LONDON:

Printed for the AUTHOR. MDCCXXXVIII.

THE

PREFACE.

THE Author of the following Sheets, not being conſcious to himſelf of any Malice or ill Deſign, is not diſpoſed to ask any Man's Pardon. He thought he had a Right to treat his own Subject in his own Way, and would not deſire to reſtrain the ſame Liberty in others. No Doubt but they who feel themſelves moſt hurt will cry out firſt, and make the loudeſt and bittereſt Complaints; but ſuch Complaints and Outcries will be regarded by rational ſober Men only in Proportion to the

Merits of the Cauſe. And, as for ſuch as may think the Argument itſelf injurious to them, if they cannot right and defend themſelves in the ſame Way, no wiſe Man would pity them how much ſo ever they might ſuffer; but if they can make Reprizals in ſuch an honourable War, the Author would never repine at his Lot, but chearfully ſubmit to the keeneſt Revenges of Truth and Reaſon; and even be always ready to own the great Advantage and Honour of being thus conquered. But if in attempting to ſerve the Cauſe of Virtue and true Religion, he has miſs'd his Aim, he has however at the ſame Time put it into the Power of his Adverſaries, by ſetting him right, to lay him under the ſtrongeſt Obligations of Gratitude and Reſpect.

It may be neceſſary here to return Thanks to thoſe Gentlemen who have lately made the beſt Defence of Chriſtianity againſt the Deiſts: Their Attempts to reſcue Chriſtianity from the

Dark-

Darkneſs of Enthuſiaſm, and the Uncertainty of every private Imagination, are highly laudable. Their reſting Religion and all its Doctrines and Obligations upon the moral Truth, Reaſon, and Fitneſs of Things, is placing it upon the only true Foundation, and where alone it can be ſecure and defenſible. But it muſt be own'd, however, and every one ſees, that moſt of theſe Gentlemen, notwithſtanding their Impartiality, have given but very little Satisfaction to ſuch Judaizing Chriſtians as would ſtill retain at leaſt ſome Things merely poſitive, ritual and ceremonial, as neceſſary Parts of Religion, or neceſſary inſtituted Means of conveying Grace, without any moral Reaſon, Fitneſs, or Congruity in the Things themſelves. And indeed, an Attempt to connect any Actions in themſelves indifferent, with the moral Truth, Reaſon and Fitneſs of Things, as ſtanding perpetual Obligations, is in effect giving up the whole Cauſe, and leaving Religion without

any certain Mark or Criterion at all. And therefore the Chriſtian Judaizers have always thought themſelves abuſed and trifled with, by all the Conceſſions which ſuch Friends of Liberty and rational Religion ſeem to make in their Favour. They take it as mere Grimace, and a Contrivance only to ſave Appearances. Theſe Gentlemen, ſay they, pretend to ſupport the poſitive, ritual and ceremonial Part of Religion, while they believe nothing of the Matter. They affect Solemnity chiefly when they are leaſt ſerious; and while they ſeem to allow the Neceſſity, or at leaſt Uſefulneſs of poſitive Inſtitutions, they are in effect explaining them away, and leaving every Man to his Liberty whether he will obſerve them or not, or to a Judgment of Diſcretion how far he is to ſubmit to ſuch Obligations; which is, ſay they, plainly ſetting aſide the Obligations, and leaving the poſitive Laws of God to be obey'd or diſobey'd, according to every Man's Judgment, Will, or Fancy.

This

This is now the Caſe, and 'tis what we may call the prudential Part of Religion. But 'tis to be hoped, that the Time will come, when Men of liberal Education, Catholick Principles and free Enquiry, will have no ſuch Obſtacles in their Way, as the Bigottry, Superſtition, and Enthuſiaſm of the loweſt and weakeſt of the People. And even now, there are but few among the Populace, who think and reaſon at all, or who have not receiv'd their Faith by Inheritance and legal Deſcent, but begin to ſee the Weakneſs and Abſurdity of that ſyſtematical Orthodoxy and Church Authority, which have been generally made the Teſt and Standard of Chriſtianity and true Religion.

But I am here authoriz'd to inform the Reader, that the Foundation of theſe Conferences was laid many Years ago, by a Society, or Club of Gentlemen in the Country, who met once a Fortnight at a Gentleman's Houſe in a pleaſant retired Village, with a Deſign to enter impartially into the Con-

ſidertion of the Grounds and Principles of Religion in general, and particularly of Chriſtianity as a Revelation diſtinct from the Religion of Nature. Theſe Debates and Conferences were continued regularly for almoſt two Years, till ſome of the principal Members were providentially placed at too great a Diſtance; but during their Enquiries and Debates, the following Principles and Poſitions were agreed on, as true and defenſible againſt all the Objections that could be then urged or thought of.

1. The moral Truth, Reaſon and Fitneſs of Actions is founded in the natural and neceſſary Relations of Perſons and Things, antecedent to any poſitive Will or Law, and therefore cannot be altered by any poſitive Will, Law, or Authority whatever.

2. The moral Truth, Reaſon, or Fitneſs of Things is the only certain Mark or Criterion of any Doctrine as coming from God, or as making any Part of true Religion.

3. The

3. The extraordinary Powers and Gifts in the Apoſtolick Age were never confin'd or annex'd to any moral Character, but the falſe Prophets and Teachers had them as well as the true; and therefore there was the ſame Reaſon and Neceſſity for Mens examining and trying all Doctrines and all Pretenſions to Prophecy, by the moral Truth, Reaſon and Fitneſs of Things then, as now.

4. Infallibility and Impeccability are the ſole Prerogative and peculiar Attributes of God. Every Being not omniſcient muſt be liable to, or capable of Error, and every wilful or voluntary Error in moral Conduct is faulty or ſinful; and conſequently the extraordinary Gifts and Powers ſo common in the Apoſtolick Age, did not make Men infallible or impeccable, as they did not deſtroy natural Liberty or free Agency; but they who were endued with them might make either a good or bad Uſe of them, as much as of any natural Faculties or Talents.

5. The

5. The Doctrines and Obligations of moral Truth and Righteousness may be conveyed and proposed to the Mind in several different Ways; *sc.* by Reason, in the natural ordinary Use of our Faculties; by Inspiration, or immediate personal Revelation from God; or, lastly, by authentick Testimony from those who were thus originally inlightened and supernaturally assisted. But in whichsoever of these Ways the Doctrines may be conveyed and proposed, the Religion is still the same, and its Evidence or Proof the same; namely, the moral Truth, Reasonableness and Fitness of the Doctrines themselves, as appearing to the Understanding, upon a fair, impartial Consideration and Judgment of Reason. If this be not allow'd, there can be no true and certain Marks or Bounds of Religion, but the grossest Errors and most diabolical Delusions might be receiv'd as divine Truths.

These were the Principles upon which the Gentlemen before-mentioned proceeded

ceeded in their Debates and Inquiries, and in which they came to ſo good an Agreement. How the Subject of theſe Conferences came to be ſo long delay'd and ſet aſide, or from what Occaſion and Motives they are permitted to appear now, would not be worth the Reader's while to know. I ſhall only ſay, that I have taken the Liberty to repreſent Things in my own Way, tho' with very little Variation from the Method in which the Argument was at firſt managed and carried on.

And now to conclude; whatever Fate theſe Papers may meet with in the World, one Thing is pretty ſure, that the Silverſmiths will be all in an Uproar for *Diana*, and *Religion* will be the Word, while they mean nothing but their *Shrines*. But tho' I am determined to defend myſelf upon all reaſonable and proper Occaſions, yet there are two Sorts of Adverſaries againſt whom I muſt except, and am reſolved never to contend with; and that is either ſuch as by a mere feign'd Op-

poſition give up the main Points in Debate; or thoſe who will grant nothing at all for fear of granting too much: Both theſe will be let paſs as inoffenſive, ſince the one only betray their Craft, and the other their Ignorance, while both equally dread the Argument, and would bring it to no Iſſue. But the fair Adverſary will be ever eſteemed and regarded by the

Moral Philoſopher.

A

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

PHILALETHES a Chriſtian DEIST,

AND

THEOPHANES a Chriſtian JEW.

Philal. WHAT! my good old Friend, dear *Theophanes!* — I rejoice to ſee you, eſpecially ſo early in the Morning. I had devoted this Day to a certain Chronological Amuſement, but now I am like to be better entertain'd.

Theoph. You are always, *Philalethes*, extremely civil to your Friends, and can make yourſelf eaſy in very indifferent Company; but as

as I come to trouble you with ſome Things, that ſit very heavy on my Mind, I wiſh our preſent Conference may not in the Iſſue give you more Pain than Pleaſure.

Philal. I muſt, indeed, enjoy or ſuffer with you as a Friend, and can receive Pleaſure only in Proportion to the Service I may be able to do you; but, pray, without farther Ceremony, let me know the Difficulties you are under, or the Ground of your preſent Uneaſineſs.

Theoph. Why, Sir, to be ſhort and plain with you, the preſent Growth of *Deiſm* gives me more Pain than I can expreſs to you. Had this Malady only infected our Rakes and pretty Fellows, Men of little Senſe and leſs Virtue, it would not have much affected me; but the Sore lies deeper, and the Malignity ſeems to ſpread itſelf thro' the whole Body, among Perſons of all Ranks, Qualities and Characters. Nay, I find ſome Men who are really exemplary for their Sobriety, Benevolence, and all the ſocial Virtues, who yet take a Liberty of talking about Religion that is perfectly ſurprizing, and too plainly diſcover themſelves to be no great Friends if not real Enemies to Chriſtianity; and to tell you the plain Truth, Sir, nothing has ſhock'd me more, or given me greater Uneaſineſs than what I heard the other Day from a common Friend of ours, who had lately the Favour of ſome free Converſation with you, that he doubted *Philalethes* himſelf might be a little, or perhaps not a little tainted with *Deiſm*.

Philal.

Philal. It is not impoſſible, *Theophanes*, but this modern Controverſy which has given you ſuch Apprehenſions may, like moſt others, be very much about Words of an indeterminate or no Signification; in my Opinion, we are not well agreed about the Meaning of the Words, *Deiſm*, *Chriſtianity*, *Revelation*, *Inſpiration*, &c. And to make a Trial of this in the Caſe before us, I ſhould be glad to know what you mean by *Chriſtianity*, or *reveal'd Religion*, as oppos'd to, or contradiſtinguiſh'd from the *Religion of Nature*.

Theoph. Chriſtianity or reveal'd Religion cannot certainly be oppoſed to the Religion of Nature, but muſt neceſſarily preſuppoſe and imply it: But what I mean by Chriſtianity, ſtrictly ſpeaking, or *reveal'd* as diſtinguiſh'd from *natural* Religion, is the *reveal'd* Truths or Doctrines of Revelation, as contain'd in the Books of the *Old* and *New Teſtament*.

Philal. This would be a very good Criterion or Teſt of reveal'd Truths and Doctrines, were the Books or Writings in which they are contain'd, ſufficiently clear, diſtinct and intelligible, ſo that Men of Honeſty and Integrity, with a common Capacity and Attention, might eaſily underſtand, and come to an Agreement about them: But this, with Submiſſion, is far from being the Caſe. The *Jews* would never admit of the Senſe which the Chriſtians have always put upon the Writings of *Moſes* and the Prophets; and ſome have thought that thoſe *Jewiſh* Authors never

never had any ſuch *Chriſtian* Meaning, becauſe they never expreſſed it. But that is not all, for the Chriſtians themſelves could never agree about the Senſe of their own Revelation, but have run into as many different and contrary Parties and Schemes upon it, as Men of the moſt diſtant and oppoſite Religions in the World; and this too, with reſpect to the moſt important and concerning Doctrines of Revelation; what one Sect or Party determines as the true and only Senſe of the Revelation, another rejects as containing no Senſe at all; what one maintains as fundamental, neceſſary, and eſſential to Chriſtianity, another explodes and condems, as falſe, dangerous and heretical: And this is not barely a Confuſion and Uncertainty occaſioned by the Luſts, Paſſions and Prejudices of Men; for tho' that may be often the Caſe, and Men from ſome corrupt Bias, or carnal Intereſt, may reſiſt the ſtrongeſt Evidence, and oppoſe even Demonſtration itſelf, yet we ſee that the moſt learned, impartial and diligent Inquirers, after all their Pains and Reſearches, are not able to come to an Agreement about the moſt important Points of mere Revelation; the Doctrine of the Trinity, the Pre-exiſtence of Chriſt from the Beginning, or before all Time, as a Being ſuperior to all Angels, Principalities and Powers, by whom God made and governs the Worlds; his Incarnation and miraculous Conception in the Womb of a Virgin, and the Neceſſity of his

Death as a Sacrifice of Propitiation or Atonement for Sin; theſe Doctrines are the moſt conſiderable Parts of the Chriſtian Revelation, and muſt therefore be of as great Conſequence as any Points of mere Revelation; and yet you muſt know that they are very differently explain'd and underſtood by the moſt learned, honeſt and careful Inquirers; nay, perhaps it is hardly poſſible for any two thinking inquiſitive Men to form the ſame Opinion and Judgment about them: What then is that reveal'd Religion, which you would diſtinguiſh from Deiſm, or the Religion of Nature? What are its moſt peculiar and important Doctrines, or the Fundamentals of Revelation? And what is the true, determinate Senſe of the Holy Ghoſt, or of the ſacred, inſpired Writers, concerning each of theſe Doctrines?

Theoph. You aſk, indeed, a very hard Queſtion, and I do not think the infallible Deciſion of it to be at all neceſſary: I could only give you my own Opinion about ſuch Matters, which perhaps might not be the ſame with yours, nor could I be accountable for it that I am not myſelf miſtaken.

Philal. None of the Doctrines of Revelation, therefore, can be fundamental or neceſſary, becauſe Miſtakes in ſuch a Caſe are eaſily made, and may be unavoidable; nay, no Man can ever be certain that he underſtands the true, determinate Senſe of the Holy Ghoſt, or the inſpired Writers, concerning ſuch ſupernatural Truths and Doctrines, which are delivered in

ambiguous Terms, and cloth'd with Expreſſions capable of very different Conſtructions.

Theoph. All that can be neceſſary in this Caſe is for Men to ſtudy the Scriptures with Impartiality and Care, and to believe the Doctrines of Revelation in the Senſe, which ſhall appear true to them after an honeſt Inquiry.

Philal. But, after ſuch an Inquiry, Men of different Reach, Capacity and Talents muſt needs think differently, or underſtand the ſame verbal Propoſitions in different Senſes; that is, they muſt believe different Doctrines concerning the ſame Thing, all of which cannot, and none of them may be, the true Senſe of the Holy Ghoſt in Scripture. The Doctrines, doubtleſs, conſiſt in the Senſe, and not in the verbal Propoſitions abſtracted from their Meaning. And therefore if two Men believe the Doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, Chriſt's Satisfaction, *&c.* in different Senſes, they really believe different Doctrines about the ſame Thing: But is it not ſtrange, that God ſhould reveal a Religion as of any Neceſſity or Uſe to Mankind, which is not to be underſtood in any one certain determinate Senſe, but may be taken in as many different Senſes as there are different Capacities, Apprehenſions and Ways of Thinking among Men? This, ſurely, could not in any Propriety of Speech be call'd *a Religion*, but muſt be a vaſt Number of Religions, perhaps, almoſt as many as there are Men: And this ſhews how much the Word Religion is abuſed, whenever it is apply'd to ſuch abſtract, intricate and

and mere ſpeculative Points, which Men may believe or not believe, which they may think differently of, or not think of at all, without affecting their moral Character. But, not to preſs you farther with this, I would here only aſk, whether the Chriſtian Revelation is contain'd in the Books of the *Old Teſtament*, or whether *Moſes* and the Prophets underſtood and taught the reveal'd Doctrines of Chriſtianity?

Theoph. Not, indeed, clearly, explicitly and literally; but darkly, obſcurely and under Types and Shadows.

Philal. Literal *Judaiſm* then, it ſeems, was figurative Chriſtianity, and literal Chriſtianity is myſtical *Judaiſm*; the Letter of the Law was the Type of the Goſpel, and the Letter of the Goſpel is the Spirit of the Law; the Law was the Goſpel under a Cloud; and the Goſpel is the Law unveil'd and farther illuminated; *Moſes* was the Shadow of Chriſt, and Chriſt is the Subſtance of *Moſes:* But tho' this Sort of Connexion and Harmony between the Law and the Goſpel, or between the *Old Teſtament* and the *New*, may give intire Satisfaction and appear perfectly juſt and beautiful to Men of deep Diſcernment and Penetration; yet it muſt, as I imagine, be a little puzzling to vulgar Underſtandings.

Theoph. It is an eaſy Matter for a Man who will indulge himſelf in this Sort of Humour, to laugh at and ridicule any Thing in the World. I am ſenſible that this Way of Talking is ſomewhat natural to you, and can therefore

make all proper Allowances for it; but then I muſt venture to ſay, that treating a ſerious Subject in a ludicrous Manner, is not juſt or natural. St. *Paul*, I believe, was a Man of very good Senſe and great Abilities, to ſay nothing of his Revelations or Inſpiration from God; and yet he was not aſham'd to ſuppoſe and maintain this figurative and typical Reſemblance, Relation or Connexion between the Law and the Goſpel. That Apoſtle, it muſt be own'd, hath ſaid many Things harſh enough of the Law; but yet he never takes Liberty to treat that important Subject in the Way of Wit and Humour; and I ſhould think ſo great an Example worthy of Imitation.

Philal. I ſeriouſly aſk your Pardon, my good Friend, if I have made too free with your Temper. I cannot well help ſpeaking of Things as they appear to me, whether in a grave and gloomy, or in a pleaſant and gay Light. If ſome Things are ridiculous in themſelves, I cannot ſee why they may not be conſidered and treated as they are. When a Man places the Ridicule wrong, it muſt certainly recoil upon himſelf; but whenever it ſticks where it is laid, it muſt always be juſt. Nothing can be odd or abſurd, but what is unreaſonable; and whoever attempts to ridicule Truth, eſpecially moral Truth, muſt make himſelf ridiculous. But this Tenderneſs, *Theophanes*, is not commonly for Truth, but for Perſons, who are ſometimes ſo very ſerious or vain, that their Opinions muſt be ſpared in Point of Civility, at the Expence of

of Truth: This might be expected from a Man who being wedded to his Opinions by Intereſt, and having taken them to have and to hold, for better and for worſe, is reſolv'd never to part with them, and is therefore ready to reſent any Thing that can be ſaid againſt theſe his eſpouſed and darling Idols, as an Affront offered to himſelf; but why a Man, who is really and ſincerely concern'd for Truth, ſhould not be willing to put it to any Teſt againſt Error, I cannot imagine. For what relates to St. *Paul*, I can aſſure you, Sir, that I have as good an Opinion of him as you can have, and ſhall willingly abide by the Judgment and Senſe of that great Apoſtle in the preſent Debate between us. It is true, that St. *Paul*, as well as all the Prophets before him, found himſelf obliged to treat the *Jews* in a very grave and ſolemn Manner; for that People being naturally reſerv'd, ſullen, moroſe and ſevere, could not bear any Thing of Wit and Humour, and would certainly have return'd a Jeſt or a Piece of Wit upon them, with a Dart or a Javelin. The Prophet *Eliſha*, we find, ſmartly laſhes the Prieſts of *Baal*, as the blind Worſhippers of a deaf and dumb God; and their other Prophets frequently expoſe the Abſurdities of the Heathen Idolatry, in this Way of Wit and Humour; but they never durſt attack the Vices or Follies of their own People in ſuch a Manner. *David* was undoubtedly the great Maſter of Poetry and Politeneſs in *Iſrael*; but we find the royal Prophet grave

and ſevere in all his Compoſitions as well as Actions, and we never hear of his Jeſting but once, when he made a Jeſt of himſelf by dancing naked before the Lord among the Daughters of *Iſrael*, and uncovering that which his Modeſty ought to have conceal'd: This was doubtleſs a merry Action, which he as merrily excuſed to his Wife, by aſcribing it to his Zeal for the Lord, and in the ſame Humour reſolv'd never to lie with her more, becauſe ſhe could not approve of this warm Zeal for the Lord among the Women. See 2 *Sam.* vi 20—23.

Theoph. Well, Sir, you muſt take your own Way, I ſhall attend the Argument, and not think myſelf much concern'd with the Wit. I have no Opinions but what I can readily part with upon any reaſonable Conviction that they are wrong; and as I can eaſily ſtand the Teſt of your Railery, ſo I am not yet greatly apprehenſive of the Reaſoning upon your Side of the Queſtion. I am glad however to find you have ſo good an Opinion of St. *Paul*, and hope that great Apoſtle, before we have done with him, may bring you into a better Opinion of *Moſes* and the Prophets. I think your Obſervation concerning *David*, is extremely ſevere, if not unjuſt. I cannot ſay, indeed, that the Place you refer to may not poſſibly bear the Conſtruction you put upon it; but this I am ſure of, that it might as well bear a more candid Interpretation. But, whatever *David* might do in his dancing, I find you and I muſt fight

fight naked, and take the rough Argument upon the bare Skin: And ſeeing you are thus hardy, I ſhall only ſtand upon the Defenſive, and endeavour to bear off the Edge as well as I can; this however you may obſerve by the Way, that he who is reſolv'd to cut, muſt ſometimes lay himſelf open, and Arguments thus pointed ought to be very well guarded, leſt the Satyre, as you ſay, ſhould recoil. But this is all beſide the Purpoſe, 'tis high Time to come to the Argument, and I ſhall be glad to know how far you would carry this Matter, and what it is that you will undertake to prove.

Philal. The Queſtion then to be debated between us, if you pleaſe, ſhall be this, Whether the poſitive and ceremonial Law of *Moſes*, commonly call'd the *Levitical* Law, or the Law concerning their Prieſthood, was originally a divine Inſtitution or Revelation from God, to be afterwards nullify'd, aboliſh'd and ſet aſide by another Revelation; or, whether it was originally a mere Piece of carnal, worldly Policy? This latter Part of the Queſtion, is what I would maintain againſt the former, which, I preſume, you will think fit to abide by, at leaſt, as long as you can.

Theoph. And that, I believe, will be as long as I live, unleſs I ſhould live to ſee another *Revelation*; for while the preſent ſtands as it is, you are never like to carry your Point. I thought you would have undertaken to prove ſomething in which St. *Paul* might have aſ-

ſiſted you; but here, I think, you bid an open and bold Defiance to that Apoſtle in the very Propoſition you have made yourſelf accountable for. I hope you will deal openly and fairly in this Argument, as between one Friend and another; and not make an Advantage to yourſelf of any Superiority of Learning, Reading, or polemical Skill, to confound my Underſtanding, and perplex the Argument. I can ſee no other Aim you can have, in ſetting St. *Paul* againſt *Moſes*, but to get rid of them both; and when once you have thrown the *Jewiſh Legiſlator* out of your Syſtem, I doubt the *Chriſtian Apoſtle* will have no Reaſon to expect a much better Fate.

Philal. Perhaps you may be miſtaken in this; but however that may be, I muſt declare myſelf of another Opinion. I can aſſure you, in the Name of Truth and Friendſhip, that I have no Intereſt, Aim at Victory, or any other ſiniſter Deſign in View; and if I cannot make it appear that St. *Paul* (when he comes to be rightly underſtood) is plainly on my Side, I will give up the Argument.

Theoph. Well, *Philalethes*, this is, I muſt own, a very extraordinary *Undertaking*; and when you have ſucceeded in it, and made good your Point, I ſhall call it an extraordinary *Performance*.

Philal. I ſhould be proud, Sir, of deſerving your Approbation; but before I enter upon the Argument, it will be neceſſary to obſerve here, that St. *Paul* in his Writings makes uſe

of

of the Word *Law* in three very different and distinct Senses or Acceptations. For, in the first Place, he sometimes by the *Law*, means the Law of *Nature*, as originally written upon the Heart; or that universal, eternal and immutable Wisdom, Reason, moral Truth or Righteousness, which being objectively proposed to the Understanding, must be the same Rule or Measure of Action to every intelligent Being alike; and when this universal, immutable Wisdom, Reason or moral Truth, is follow'd and complied with, as the Will and Law of God, the supreme Being, and the most powerful, wise and righteous Creator and Governor of the World, it then constitutes what we call the Religion of Nature, which is every where and at all Times the same, as much as God himself. This, according to St. *Paul*, was the Law, Rule or Measure of Action, from which Mankind in general, both *Jew* and *Gentile*, had fallen and revolted, and to which they were to be again restored by the Grace or Favour of God, manifested in the Gospel by *Jesus Christ*; which Grace or Manifestation of Truth, teacheth Men to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to practise Sobriety, Righteousness and Godliness in the World: This is that *Law of Faith*, or *Law of Righteousness*, by which the *New Man* or *New Creature* was to be formed, directed and governed under the Gospel Dispensation, in Opposition to all those carnal Motives, and worldly, temporary Views, by which Men had been

been influenced and governed before. This is that Law which remain'd written in Nature, as a ſtanding Witneſs and Teſtimony for God and true Religion, even among the *Gentiles*, under all their groſs Idolatry, Ignorance and moral Wickedneſs; in conſequence of which they were forced either to acquit or condemn themſelves, their own Conſciences excuſing or accuſing them, in Spite of all the Magick, Miracles and pretended Revelations of their Prieſts to the contrary. But, ſecondly, St. *Paul* by the Word *Law*, ſometimes means the *Moral Law* given by *Moſes* to the People of *Iſrael*, as the Civil or political Law of that *Nation*: And, in this Senſe, the Apoſtle declares the Law to be holy, juſt and good; he ſpeaks of it as a *School-Maſter* to lead us to *Chriſt*; or, a Conſtitution wiſely adapted to prepare and diſpoſe Men for a more complete and perfect Diſpenſation of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs under the Goſpel. But then he declares the Law as thus conſidered, to have been weak, imperfect and defective, as neither propoſing ſufficient Motives, nor affording ſufficient Aids to a complete State of Virtue and true Religion: This is what St. *Paul* often mentions and largely inſiſts upon in his Writings, and the Reaſons of this Weakneſs and Inſufficiency of the Moral Law, as deliver'd by *Moſes*, are very obvious. For, as this Law was barely Civil, Political or National, ſo all its Sanctions were merely Temporal, relating only to Mens outward Practice and Behaviour in Society,

none

none of its Rewards or Punishments relating to any future State, or extending themselves beyond this Life: All the Sanctions of this Law were such as could be dispensed by Men, under a human Jurisdiction and Cognizance; or else such as being awarded by God himself in temporal Prosperity or Adversity, might be seen and judged of by the whole Society. Now 'tis evident, that a Law thus constituted could only extend to outward Actions, and thereby secure Civil Virtue, and the Civil Rights and Properties of the Society, against such Fraud or Violence as might fall under a human Cognizance; but could not relate to the inward Principles and Motives of Action, whether good or bad, and therefore could not purify the Conscience, regulate the Affections, or correct and restrain the vitious Desires, Inclinations and Dispositions of the Mind. And this is what St. *Paul* means, as often as he declares the Weakness or Insufficiency of this Law to enforce, or secure a State of inward, real Virtue or Righteousness, with respect to God and Conscience. And, as this Law could only reach the outward Practice and Behaviour of Men in Society, so it was very defective even in that, as providing no sufficient Remedy against any such Immoralities, Excesses and Debaucheries, in which a Man might only make a Fool or a Beast of himself, without directly hurting his Neighbour or injuring the Society. Nay, the Obligations of the Law, with respect to this Civil

or

or Social Virtue, extended no farther than to the Members of that Society; that is, to thoſe who were either of the natural Seed of *Abraham*, or ſuch as by Proſelytiſm were incorporated with them, and allow'd to live among them. But, tho' they were obliged to live in Peace and Amity with one another, or within themſelves, yet they were put into a State of War with all the reſt of the World; they were not only left at Liberty, but encouraged and directed by *Moſes* himſelf to extend their Conqueſts as far as they could, and to deſtroy by Fire and Sword, any or every Nation or People that reſiſted them, and that would not ſubmit to become their Subjects and Tributaries, upon Demand: The Inhabitants of *Canaan* were to be utterly deſtroy'd Root and Branch without Mercy, not ſparing or leaving alive Man, Woman or Child. But, with regard to their farther Conqueſt of other Nations, for which they were deſign'd, and for which their Plan of Government was contriv'd, their Commiſſion from *Moſes* ran thus, When they came into any Country, without, or beyond the Borders of *Canaan*, to make War upon it and to conquer it, they were firſt to offer them Terms of Peace and Accommodation, in which the Lives of the People were to be ſpared, upon Condition of their becoming Subjects and Tributaries to theſe generous Conquerors; but in Caſe of Refuſal, they were to put all the Males to the Sword, to take the Women

men to themſelves as Slaves, Captives or Priſoners of War, and to ſeize upon all their Wealth and Property, Goods and Cattle, as the lawful Plunder of the conquering Army, *Deut.* xx. 10—18. Thus it is evident, that the People of *Iſrael*, upon the very Conſtitution of the Law and fundamental Principles of *Moſes*, were not to maintain any Peace or Amity with any other Nation or People, but on Condition of ſubmitting to them as their Subjects, Slaves and Tributaries, under ſuch Terms as they ſhould think fit to impoſe. And thus narrow, defective and imperfect was even the moral Part of this Law, with regard both to its Precepts and Sanctions. But then, in the laſt Place, the Apoſtle by the Word *Law* frequently underſtands the ritual, ceremonial Law of *Moſes*, or the legal Conſtitution of their Prieſthood. And in this Senſe he is always to be underſtood, where he abſolutely rejects and condemns the Law as *carnal*, *worldly* and *deadly*, and ſpeaks of it with Contempt as the *Law of Ordinances*, *beggarly Elements* and the *Rudiments of this World*, which in its original, proper and literal Senſe, had neither any Thing of Truth or Goodneſs in it, but a blinding, inſlaving Conſtitution, and ſuch an intolerable Yoke of Darkneſs and Bondage, Tyranny and Vaſſalage, Wrath and Miſery, that neither they nor their Fathers were ever able to bear it. This Apoſtle therefore, though he had been born and educated a *Jew*, endeavours to ſet aſide the Law as thus conſidered, under the Notion of its having been only

only a *Figure* of *better Things to come*, which was now to be null'd and abrogated by the Chriſtian Diſpenſation. He repreſents Chriſt as the only High-Prieſt, who was to continue for ever, and his Death as the only true and effectual Sacrifice for Sin, by which all other Sacrifices were to ceaſe and to be done away for ever. This was plainly St. *Paul*'s Account of the *Jewiſh* Law, as reſpecting their Sacrifices and Prieſthood; and how he could declare all this with any Notion or Belief of the ritual, ceremonial Law and Prieſthood as a divine Inſtitution, or a Revelation from God, I ſhould be glad to know.

Theoph. I have heard you, as you may have obſerv'd, with great Patience and Attention; and I muſt own that your Diſtinction of the ſeveral different Senſes or Acceptations in which St. *Paul* uſes the Word *Law*, has given me ſome farther Light, and may ſerve to reconcile and conciliate ſeveral Diſputes and Controverſies, which have ariſen among Chriſtians of different Parties and Denominations. But yet you muſt give me leave ſtill to ſuppoſe, that you have not yet clear'd the main Difficulty, and that you muſt, after all, either acquit *Moſes* as a faithful Servant of God, or condemn St. *Paul* as a Diſſembler and a Betrayer of the Truth. St. *Paul*, indeed, ſpeaks of the ritual, ceremonial Law and *Jewiſh* Prieſthood in the ſame diminutive and contemptible Terms as you have obſerv'd: But then, how does he do this, or in what View does he conſider the

Law when he thus ſpeaks of it? Why, I think plainly, in the groſs, miſtaken Senſe of the *Jews*, who took it for a Law of perfect Righteouſneſs, or as the Means of their Acceptance and Juſtification with God. In this Senſe, and this Senſe only, the Apoſtle rejects and condemns the Law, and gives it all the opprobrious Characters and Epithets which you have mentioned. I agree with you that the Law of *Moſes*, with reſpect both to the moral and ceremonial Part of it, is to be underſtood and conſider'd only as the national, political or civil Law of *Iſrael*, and as ſuch it might be very well and wiſely adapted to the Temper, Genius and Circumſtances of that People; and conſequently might be a divine Inſtitution, and every Way worthy of God, the Author of it, at that Time, and under theſe Circumſtances; tho' it never was intended as a Law of perfect Righteouſneſs, or a complete Syſtem of Religion, with reſpect to Conſcience and the Intereſts of another World. Now, this being ſo, St. *Paul* might reject and condemn the Law in this miſtaken Senſe of it, without condemning *Moſes*, or ſetting up a *new* Revelation in Oppoſition to the *old*.

Philal. I think you have here offered the Sum of what has been or may be ſaid in Favour of the common Hypotheſis, and moſt prevailing Scheme among Chriſtians. But you confound ſeveral Things, which ought to be more diſtinctly conſidered, and take other Things for granted, which will not be eaſily admitted without farther Proof. And, in the

firſt

firſt Place, I would aſk you, What Diſtinction there could be, under the *Moſaick* Theocracy, between *Religion* and *civil Law*, where God himſelf was in both Caſes the ſole Legiſlator; or whether, according to the Conſtitution of *Moſes*, *Religion* and *Law* were not both one and the ſame Thing? In the next Place, I would aſk you, Whether you can find any Reaſon or Foundation in all the Writings of *Moſes*, or his Commentators the Prophets, for that typical, figurative and allegorical Senſe of the legal Prieſthood, Sacrifices and Ceremonies, which St. *Paul* ſuppoſes and argues upon in his Reaſonings againſt the *Jews*, in order to ſet aſide this Prieſthood and the Law of Ceremonies depending upon it, as fulfill'd and accompliſh'd in Chriſt? And, laſtly, give me leave to aſk, Whether God can eſtabliſh Iniquity by Law, or whether a Law, which in St. *Paul*'s Opinion, introduced and confirm'd a State of civil and religious Blindneſs and Bigottry, Tyranny and Slavery, could, in the ſame Judgment, have been originally a divine Inſtitution, and an immediate Revelation from God?

Theoph. I think we are now got into the Heat of the Battle; you charge me home, and I expect no Quarter. But yet, under the Indulgence of your Patience, and with Submiſſion to better Judgment, I hope to take off the Edge of your Arguments in ſuch a Manner, as not to condemn *Moſes* any farther than you yourſelf muſt be obliged to condemn St. *Paul*. You muſt ſuffer me, *Philalethes*, to hold

hold you ſtrictly to this Point, I have certainly a Right to it, as it was your own Propoſal.

Philal. I am content, I take you upon no other Terms, and you may therefore go on in the Name of Truth and Goodneſs.

Theoph. In Anſwer then to your firſt Demand, I think, that under the *Moſaick* OEconomy, there might be, and really was a juſt and neceſſary Diſtinction between *Religion* and *Civil Law*, or which is the ſame Thing, between internal and external Religion. And this Diſtinction both *Moſes* himſelf, and his Commentators the Prophets, made and kept up all along, as much as St. *Paul* did afterwards. It is true, indeed, that the Law of *Moſes*, as a national, civil Law, could only extend to Mens outward Practice, as Members of Society, and could take no direct Notice of the inward Principles and Motives of Action, as not being liable to a human Juriſdiction. But then, I ſay, that *Moſes* and the Prophets always ſuppoſed an inward, right Motive, or the Principle and Diſpoſition of Love to God and our Neighbour, as neceſſary to conſtitute the true Morality and Religion of an Action with reſpect to God and Conſcience. And thus, tho' an external, civil Virtue, or beneficent Behaviour in Society, might intitle Men to the civil Rewards and temporal Advantages of the Law; yet this, without inward, right Motives and Principles of Ac-

tion, could never denominate them truly good Men, or make them perfect and upright in the Sight of God. And, tho' the *Mosaick* Constitution, as a national, civil Law, could not take in the inward Motives and Principles of Action, but confin'd its legal, temporal Sanctions to such outward Practice as might fall under a human Cognizance and Jurisdiction; yet it is evident, that the Lawgiver himself had a farther View, and directed the People to the right Motive and Principle of Action, *i. e.* to the inward, sincere Love of God and their Neighbour, as the End of the Law, and the principal Thing that would be regarded in the Sight of God. See *Deut.* vi. 5. *Levit.* xix. 18. That this inward, spiritual Principle of Obedience, as necessary to a State of true Religion and Virtue, was all along understood and insisted on during the legal OEconomy, might be proved from innumerable Testimonies out of the Law and the Prophets; but I shall here content myself with only mentioning two or three more. The first shall be that famous Passage in the Prophet *Micah*, Chap. vi. 5—8. where we find a Quotation from the Discourse which passed between *Balak* King of *Moab*, and *Balaam* the Prophet, whom the King had sent for to curse the People of *Israel*, and enable him to drive them out of his Territories. The King having offered the Prophet vast Rewards, if he could deliver him from this Calamity,

lamity, asks him what he should do to recommend himself to the Favour of the great God, and to get rid of this numerous and devouring People. *Wherewith*, saith he, *shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? shall I come before him with Burnt-Offerings, and with Calves of a Year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oil? Shall I give my First-born for my Transgression, or the Fruit of my Body for the Sin of my Soul?* To whom the Prophet, *i. e. Balaam*, replies, *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Here the Prophet, in the King's great Distress and terrible Apprehensions from the Presence of a conquering, desolating Enemy, gives this excellent Advice, to humble himself before God, and to govern and direct all his Actions by the Love of Justice and Mercy, as the only Means to obtain the Favour of God, and secure the divine Protection to himself and People. That this is a Quotation from *Balaam* in his Answer to *Balak*, is, I think, plain from the Text, tho' this Passage in all our present Copies is now lost. To the same Purpose we find throughout the Book of *Psalms*, that when *David* had committed any great and grievous Offence, and thereby incurr'd God's Displeasure, he had no Dependence upon Sacrifices and Burnt-Of-

ferings, or any of the outward, ritual Obſervances of the Law; but acknowledges the abſolute Neceſſity of cleanſing his Heart, purifying his Conſcience, and putting away his Sin in the very Habit and Diſpoſition of it. And 'tis evident, that the Prophets all along under the *Moſaick* Diſpenſation, were Preachers of Righteouſneſs to that People, as *Noah* had been to the old World; and that they conſtantly declared the Vanity and utter Inſufficiency of Sacrifices, and all the outward Obſervances of the Law, without a ſtrict Regard to and Love of Truth, Juſtice and Mercy; and even in our Saviour's Time the *Jews*, from the higheſt to the loweſt, own'd the Obligation, and could not ſtifle their Convictions of it, how much ſoever they had loſt or neglected the Practice. Their moſt learned Men, and Chriſt's greateſt Enemies, allow'd, that to love God above all, and our Neighbour as ourſelves, was the Sum and Subſtance, the End and Deſign of the whole Law. See *Mark* xii. 28——33. *Luke* x. 25——28. And it was this Doctrine which ſtruck the common People with ſuch ſtrong Convictions, and convey'd our Saviour's Diſcourſes to their Hearts and Conſciences with ſo much Efficacy and Power; a plain Proof that internal Religion was underſtood and own'd by them from the higheſt to the loweſt, tho' not much practiſed; and even own'd as the great End and Deſign of the whole Law. This, I think, is an Anſwer to your firſt Queſtion, What Diſtinction there could be under the Law of

of *Moſes*, between *Religion* and Civil Law. Your ſecond Queſtion ſeems to me a little extraordinary, conſidering the Conceſſions you have made, and your Promiſe in this Caſe to abide by St. *Paul*'s Senſe and Judgment. For you aſk, whether there can be any Reaſon or Foundation in all the Writings of *Moſes*, or his Commentators the Prophets, for that typical, figurative and allegorical Senſe of the legal Prieſthood, Sacrifices and Ceremonies, which St. *Paul* ſuppoſes and argues upon in his Reaſonings againſt the *Jews*, in order to ſet aſide this Prieſthood, and the Law of Ceremonies depending upon it, as fulfill'd and accompliſh'd in Chriſt? Now, I think, that St. *Paul*'s Judgment and Authority, which you declare yourſelf ready to abide by in this Caſe, is an evident Proof, that the ceremonial Law had originally ſuch a typical and figurative Senſe or Reference to Chriſt and the Goſpel Diſpenſation, tho' for want of a clearer Revelation, perhaps *Moſes* and the Prophets might not ſufficiently underſtand it; and this might be the Reaſon why they ſay ſo little of it. But ſince, as it is plain, St. *Paul* takes up with this typical and figurative Senſe of the Law, and argues from it, you muſt either admit of this Conſtruction, or quit that Apoſtle's Authority, and at the ſame Time make him a very inconſiſtent and injudicious Writer; which yet, as I imagine, he was not. As to your third Queſtion, I think I have anſwered it already, That St. *Paul* did not cenſure or condemn the ceremonial Law in itſelf, or as

inſtituted by God, with a due Relation to the Circumſtances of that People; but only under that falſe miſtaken Senſe in which the *Jews* had underſtood it, as a Law of perfect Righteouſneſs, and the proper Means of Juſtification with God; which Purpoſe it could not poſſibly anſwer, and for which it was never intended, as the Apoſtle largely proves.

Philal. You ſee, *Theophanes*, that I can exerciſe Patience as well as you. It is always agreeable enough to me to hear a Man of Senſe and Learning make the beſt even of a bad Cauſe. But, as I have heard you out, you muſt grant me the ſame Indulgence in replying to the ſeveral Parts of your Argument, as you have here repreſented the Matter. I entirely approve of your Diſtinction between external and internal *Religion*, as very juſt and natural; and I never doubted but the *Jews*, and all other Nations, ever made this Diſtinction. For tho' ſome might have leſs Regard to it than others, yet the Religion of Nature could never be wholly effaced on the Mind, or quite razed out of the Hearts of Men. Both *Jews* and *Gentiles* had always this eternal, immutable Law of Righteouſneſs, or natural Rule of Rectitude to guide them, and could not help either approving or diſapproving their own Actions, and excuſing or accuſing themſelves, according to their Compliance or Non-compliance with it. But then, what you ſeem to ſuppoſe farther, that this Diſtinction between internal and external Religion, is the ſame with the general

Diſtinc-

Diſtinction between *Religion* and *Civil Law*, I can by no Means allow, and muſt beg Leave to deny. I ſay, that under the *Moſaick* Diſpenſation, or *Jewiſh* Theocracy, there could be no Diſtinction between their national *Civil Law*, and their national *Eſtabliſh'd Religion*, both being the ſame, as deliver'd by the ſame Lawgiver, and ſubjected to the ſame Juriſdiction and Rules of Judgment. In other States and Kingdoms the Caſe is very different, where their Civil Laws being only the Conſtitutions or Ordinances of Men, can be no farther binding upon Conſcience, or in Point of Religion, than as they are agreeable to, or not inconſiſtent with the Laws of God. But the Law of *Moſes* being ſuppoſed in all its Parts, ceremonial as well as moral, to be equally the Law of God, the People were equally obliged to comply with the Whole in Point of Religion, Conſcience, or Obedience to God. That Mens obſerving the ritual Part of this Law could not entitle them to the Favour and Protection of God, without inward Purity and real Virtue, is very true; neither could inward Purity and Virtue give them any ſuch Right or Title, under that Diſpenſation, without a ſtrict, religious Regard to the Law of Ceremonies, as *Moſes* and all the Prophets declare. Both were alike neceſſary, as being equally the Law of God; and one without the other, under ſuch a Conſtitution, could not have been accepted or rewarded. But your great and main Obſervation and Objection is this, That St. *Paul* does

not condemn and explode the ceremonial Law in itſelf, as the Law of God, or a divine Inſtitution; but only under that miſtaken Senſe, in which the *Jews* had underſtood it, by confounding it with the Law of Righteouſneſs. Now, that this great Apoſtle did not and could not argue againſt the Law of Ceremonies, as the Law of God, or a divine Inſtitution, will be readily granted; and yet, that he does actually and in Fact condemn the Law itſelf, and not barely the miſtaken Notions of the *Jews* about it, may be as eaſily prov'd. Suppoſing St. *Paul* to have had no other Deſign, but to correct the Abuſes and wrong Applications of the *Jewiſh* ritual Law, he would have brought and levied his Arguments only againſt thoſe Abuſes, and not have laid in his Charge ſo home againſt the Law itſelf, in its own intrinſick Conſtitution and natural Tendency, as he always does, wherever he is ſpeaking of the ceremonial Law. It was not only the Abuſes of this *Law*, but the *Law itſelf*, that in St. *Paul*'s Language and Stile, was carnal, worldly and deadly, a moſt intolerable Yoke, or cruel Bondage; and a Conſtitution that could ſerve only to blind and enſlave thoſe that were under it. And, this being the Caſe, the Apoſtle muſt doubtleſs be very much diſappointed, to find his Countrymen ſtill ſo fond of ſuch a State of Blindneſs and Slavery, after they had ſo fair an Opportunity to part with it, and to reſtore themſelves to the Light and Liberty of Nature and true Religion. But

the

the plain Truth of the Matter was, that St. *Paul* preached a new Doctrine, contrary to *Moſes* and the Prophets. And I may venture to ſay, that there is not one End, Uſe or Purpoſe of the ritual Law, as declared by *Moſes*, but what is as directly contradicted and deny'd by this Apoſtle. *Moſes* delivered the whole Law to the People of *Iſrael*, both ceremonial and moral, as from the Mouth of God himſelf, and as a perpetual ſtanding Ordinance, or everlaſting Conſtitution and Covenant between God and them throughout all their Generations, or to the End of the World: St. *Paul*, on the contrary, declares it to have been only an occaſional, temporary Thing, never intended for Perpetuity, but to laſt only for a few Ages. *Moſes*, in the moſt direct, poſitive and expreſs Terms, often repeated throughout his whole Law, eſtabliſhes Propitiations and Atonements for Sin, by the Blood of Beaſts, and declares that upon the Action of the Prieſt in ſprinkling the ſacrificial Blood, the Atonement ſhould be made and the Offence forgiven; and accordingly he ordains daily Sacrifices, and annual ſacrificial Feaſts for the Sins of the whole People, and this without any the leaſt Hint or Intimation of any Type or farther Reference: But St. *Paul*, on the contrary, declares it as impoſſible for the Blood of Bulls and Goats to take away Sin; and condemns this literal Senſe of the Law, as a Scheme of natural Blindneſs and Bondage, that cannot conſiſt either with the civil or religious Rights and

and Liberties of Mankind. *Moſes* commands all Idolatry to be exterminated by Fire and Sword, not only in *Canaan*, but all the reſt of the World, ſo far as his People ſhould have it in their Power; of which, tho' he was very confident, yet he was not certain: But St. *Paul* ſtrictly forbids all Wars, Commotions and Violence upon this Account; he declares, that every Man ought to think and judge for himſelf; and that Conſcience, being every where alike ſacred, ought to be left to the ſole Force of Reaſon and Evidence. *Moſes* inſtituted a Prieſthood, which was to govern the Nation as prime Miniſters, Repreſentatives and Vice-gerents of God, and to drain all the Wealth and Treaſures of the Kingdom into the Church; as they muſt neceſſarily have done, had his Law been ſtrictly executed: But St. *Paul*, the great Apoſtle of our Religion, left the Chriſtian Miniſtry to ſubſiſt only upon Charity, and obliges no body to pay them any Thing but juſt as they deſerv'd.

Theoph. I muſt own that you have here been ſevere enough, but yet, I think, not ſufficiently clear. If the Books of *Moſes* had no ſuch typical, figurative or allegorical Senſe, as St. *Paul* ſuppoſes and argues upon, it muſt follow, that his Arguments are all inconcluſive, and that he ran into this Way of Reaſoning, only to impoſe on and delude the *Jews*. If you are in the Right, therefore, St. *Paul* muſt have been in the Wrong. That Chriſt himſelf, as well as St. *Paul*, undertook to juſtify the Goſ-

pel

pel Scheme upon the Foot of *Moſes* and the Prophets, and always quoted the Books and Writings of the *Jews* againſt them, is as clear as Daylight, or as viſible as the Books and Writings themſelves. But, if theſe Books and Writings had really and originally no ſuch Senſe, I ſay, the Arguments and Reaſonings built upon that Suppoſition, muſt have been all ſophiſtical and inconcluſive. And this ſeems ſo evident to me, that I ſhall now leave you to vindicate the Honour and Integrity of St. *Paul*, or even of Chriſt himſelf, in the beſt Manner you can.

Philal. The Queſtion then in Debate between us is now reduced to this, How *Moſes* and the Prophets ſhould have any ſuch typical, figurative and allegorical Senſe, as is aſcribed to them by Chriſt and the Apoſtles in the *New Teſtament*, when they expreſs no ſuch Senſe, or give any the leaſt Hint or Intimation of it in their own Writings? And, on the other Hand, How this typical, figurative and allegorical Senſe came to be fix'd on them, and aſcrib'd to them by the Apoſtle, if it was not the true, original Senſe and Intention of thoſe Authors themſelves? For it looks odd, and ſomewhat unaccountable, that *Moſes* and the Prophets ſhould have an Intention or Meaning which they never expreſs'd; or that St. *Paul* ſhould charge a typical and figurative Senſe upon them, which they never meant or intended.

Theoph. This is, indeed, the great Difficulty,

culty, and if you can ſolve this Phænomenon, you will clear up the whole Matter. But, as we are now come to the Pinch of the Argument, I hope we ſhall be both ſerious and ſedate upon it. I know your Temper is ſomewhat warm and volatile, and that you are very apt to expreſs yourſelf polemically, in Terms not very agreeable to Men of different Sentiments, However, as I converſe with you under the Confidence and Truſt of Friendſhip, and have an Opinion of your Integrity, you may talk in your own Way without diſpleaſing me.

Philal. You almoſt ſooth and ſoften me into Complacency. I could even find in my Heart to be argumentatively civil. But, as I cannot abſolutely be accountable for this, I muſt beg your Pardon, if the Warmth of my Temper ſhould carry me beyond the Bounds of Decency. Yet, however that may be, I ſhall neverthleſs endeavour to ſolve the Difficulty before us, and then ſubmit to your Judgment, whether I am in the Right or Wrong. Now, here I think it of great Conſequence to obſerve, that this typical, figurative and allegorical Senſe of *Moſes* and the Prophets, had been never known or heard of among the *Jews*, till after their Captivities. But, from the Time of *Ezra* or *Eſdras*, this figurative Interpretation of the Law and the Prophets came into Vogue, and was generally receiv'd by the Rabbi's or *Jewiſh* Doctors, down to our Saviour's Time, and about a Century

Century lower. How this figurative, allegorical Senſe and Conſtruction of the Law came to be ſo generally receiv'd after the Days of *Ezra*, which had been never known or heard of before, may be a Matter of farther Inquiry: But, that it was really ſo in Fact, is too well known, and too plain from all the *Jewiſh* Antiquities, to be doubted of or denied.

Theoph. I muſt own that I am not ſufficiently acquainted with the *Jewiſh* Antiquities, to judge determinately of what you here aſſert as a Matter of Fact; that this figurative Senſe and Conſtruction of *Moſes* and the antient Prophets came in ſo late, and that it had never been ſo underſtood or apply'd before among them. But, if this be really ſo in Fact, I preſume you will be able to produce ſome Reaſons and Authorities for it, and ſhew how this great Revolution in Religion came about. I do not here expect that you ſhould enter into a long Detail of Hiſtory, ſuch as could not fall within the Compaſs of this Debate; but I only deſire your Reaſons and Authorities in ſhort, upon which you ground ſuch an Opinion.

Philal. All the *Jewiſh* Books written before and ſince the Days of *Ezra* or *Eſdras*, are ſo many clear Records or ſtanding Memorials for the Truth of what I have ſaid. The figurative, allegorical or ſpiritualizing Senſe of the Law and the Prophets came in then, in, and after the Time of *Ezra*, and had never been known or heard of before; for which I would only

only appeal to the Books and Writings themſelves, and I think there can be no fairer Appeal than this. Before the Period here fix'd, no *Jewiſh* Writer, Prieſt or Prophet had ever mentioned a Word of a Conflagration of the World by Fire, a general Reſurrection and Judgment of good and bad Men, and a conſequent future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, as the proper Sanctions and Security of Virtue and Religion is this Life: But after this Time, we find all the *Jewiſh* Antiquities, that are come to our Hands, about Religion and moral Conduct, full of theſe Doctrines, and many of them teaching theſe Points as plainly and expreſſly as the Goſpels themſelves. From whence, I preſume, one may fairly conclude, that this great Revolution in Religion among the *Jews*, happened in the Days of *Ezra*; and that no ſuch Doctrine, or ſpiritual Senſe of the Law and the Prophets, had ever been known or receiv'd among that People before.

Theoph. What you ſay here is very ſurprizing, and I think unaccountable. If the *Jewiſh* Nation had never receiv'd any ſuch Doctrines, as a Reſurrection of the Dead, a general Judgment, and a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, before the Days of *Ezra*, how came they by any ſuch Doctrines or Opinions then? For they never pretended to any new Revelation, they never confin'd themſelves to the Authority of *Eſdras*, and much leſs to any of their Doctors and great Men

Men after his Time; but always quoted *Moſes* and their moſt antient Prophets for whatever they believ'd concerning thoſe Doctrines, which you ſuppoſe to have been modern and new-fangled.

Philal. What you here obſerve is very true, that the Rabbins, Doctors or learned Men among the *Jews*, long after the Days of *Ezra*, and even in our Saviour's Time, quoted *Moſes* and their moſt antient Prophets for the Doctrines then generally receiv'd and taught. But then, pray how did they quote them, or in what Senſe did they apply them? Not in the original, proper and literal Senſe of thoſe Authors themſelves; but in their own new, figurative and allegorical Senſe, by which they could make them ſpeak whatever they pleaſed.

Theoph. But, how came this new, figurative and allegorical Senſe into Uſe after *Ezra*'s Time, that had never been uſed or known before? Did *Eſdras* upon a new Revelation eſtabliſh a new Religion?

Philal. Perhaps, if you ſuppoſed the Affirmative, you might not be much in the Wrong. But, however, the Matter may admit of ſome farther Explication.

Theoph. I hope ſo; and you who have thought ſo much upon this Subject, may be preſumed as the likelieſt Man to let us into ſuch a Secret.

Philal. There is nothing ſo ſecret as the plaineſt Truths, and nothing more plain than Myſteries.

Myſteries. How ſo wiſe, ſo penetrating, and ſo virtuous a People as the *Jews*, ſhould be firſt impoſed on, or rather how they ſhould impoſe upon themſelves, is a Myſtery; and how they ſhould afterwards come to be better informed, without diſcovering the Impoſition, is ſtill a greater Myſtery; but how this came about, is a plain, obvious Truth, and no Myſtery at all.

Theoph. I have no exorbitant Paſſion for Myſteries; but, I think, *Philalethes*, that having involved yourſelf in ſuch Darkneſs, you ought to explain *this Myſtery*, that is, explain *yourſelf*. I believe there are ſuch Things as Myſteries in Religion, and I find, there are myſterious Men, as well as myſterious Doctrines; but perhaps you may not diſtinguiſh between a Myſtery and a Jeſt.

Philal. I have no Deſign, *Theophanes*, I can aſſure you, to involve myſelf in Darkneſs, to confound Truth with Falſhood, or to perplex the Nature and Reaſon of Things. But I think it incumbent on me to ſhew why the *Jewiſh* Doctors, after the Time of *Ezra*, might expound the Law and the Prophets to the People in a figurative, allegorical Senſe, which they had never done before. That this was ſo in Fact, that in and after the Days of *Ezra*, the *Jewiſh* Cabbaliſts, under the Pretence of an oral Tradition from *Moſes*, introduced a myſtical, allegorical Senſe of their original Books, and under that Pretence put what Conſtruction they pleaſed upon the Law

and the Prophets, which had never been known or heard of before, Dr. *Prideaux* has largely and clearly proved, to whoſe Hiſtory of the *Old* and *New Teſtament* Connected I refer you, for farther Satisfaction in this Point, if you can be in any Doubt of it, after what he has there ſhewed, and what has been univerſally own'd by all other Antiquaries on the Chriſtian Side, and even by the *Jews* themſelves. And Dr. *Prideaux* gives a Reaſon for this great Change in the Senſe and Conſtruction of the original *Hebrew* Text after the Days of *Ezra*; which is this, that the common People having then loſt their original Language after their Captivity, were obliged to receive both the true Reading and Senſe of their antient ſacred Books from their learned Doctors, the Maſorites and Cabbaliſts: Which gave theſe learned Gentlemen an Opportunity to advance and propagate what Doctrines they pleaſed under the Authority of *Moſes* and the Prophets; and becauſe they could not pretend to ſupport ſuch new Doctrines, from the original, proper and literal Senſe of the Text which they read and expounded; therefore they ſet up an oral Tradition to juſtify their arbitrary Interpretations, as the Papiſts have done ſince; nor did theſe *Jewiſh* Maſorites and Cabbaliſts ever pretend to any other Authority for their new-fangled Doctrines and arbitrary Interpretations of *Moſes* and the Prophets.

Theoph. But, I hope, you will not ſay, that Chriſt and the Apoſtles, particularly St. *Paul*, ran into theſe new-fangled Doctrines and arbitrary Interpretations of Scripture, or that they miſunderſtood and miſapply'd *Moſes* and the Prophets, as much as the *Jewiſh* Cabbaliſts. I can eaſily ſuppoſe and allow, that the *Jewiſh* Rabbins, Doctors or Expounders of the Law, might run into as many abſurd and groundleſs Expoſitions of the Law and the Prophets as you pleaſe, and upon which they had eſtabliſh'd the Traditions of their Elders, and ſet aſide the Law and Commandments of God: But I cannot imagine, that Chriſt and St. *Paul* would follow them herein, or that they would eſpouſe and retain any Thing in the Chriſtian Scheme, but what was originally the true Senſe and Intention of *Moſes* and the Prophets themſeves, thoſe antient ſcriptural Records from whence they made their Quotations.

Philal. But do you think, that Chriſt and the Apoſtles, particularly St. *Paul*, might not argue againſt the *Jews* upon their own Principles, and without entering into the Merits of the Cauſe, endeavour to confute them in their own Way from their own Conceſſions? Might they not take up with the ſame Principles againſt ſuch Men, to introduce and eſtabliſh the *true Religion*, which they had made uſe of, and apply'd, to eſtabliſh and perpetuate a *falſe one?* St. *Paul*'s rejecting and renouncing the ceremonial Law according to the

the Letter, or in its literal Senſe, when *Moſes* had delivered and enforced it in no other Senſe; his declaring it to be abſolutely null and void, aboliſh'd and done away by the Death of Chriſt, when *Moſes* had given it from God, as a perpetual ſtanding Ordinance throughout all their Generations, or as long as they ſhould continue a diſtinct ſeparate People; and his declaring it to be a carnal, worldly, blinding and enſlaving Conſtitution, when *Moſes* had delivered it as the peculiar Favour, and diſtinguiſhing Privilege of the People of God: Theſe, I think, are as plain Declarations as can be, that ſuch a Law could never be of divine Inſtitution, and conſequently needed no new Revelation to ſet it aſide, but only that People ſhould act in ſuch a Caſe upon the common Principles of Nature and Reaſon, by throwing off, when they had ſuch a proper Opportunity, a national Slavery, which they had been unjuſtly ſubjected to hitherto, and could be under no Obligations to continue.

Theoph. You own, that St. *Paul* declared the *Jewiſh* ceremonial Law to be null'd, vacated, aboliſh'd and done away by the Death and Sacrifice of Chriſt; but did he do this without Authority from God, without any new Revelation, as you ſay, or without any original Ground or Foundation in the Conſtitution of the Law itſelf?

Philal. Every ſlaviſh Conſtitution has in itſelf a ſufficient Reaſon and Foundation for ſetting it aſide, and for Peoples aſſerting and re-

aſſuming their natural and religious Rights and Liberties, as ſoon as it is in their Power, and they have a proper Opportunity for it; and this is what St. *Paul* would have perſuaded his Country-men to, at that Time when the *Romans* had aſſum'd and taken to themſelves, the Power of Life and Death, and indeed, all other Juriſdiction in *Judea*, and when no Man could be try'd, convicted or condemn'd upon the Law of *Moſes*. And that St. *Paul* proceeds upon this political or prudential Principle, and not upon any Revelation in that Caſe made to him, is plain, from his whole Conduct. That St. *Paul* in his Preaching to the *Gentiles*, and to the Diſperſed among the *Jews*, throughout all the Parts of the *Roman* Empire, had ſet aſide the Obligation of the *Jewiſh*, ceremonial Law, and declar'd it fulfill'd, aboliſh'd and done away by the Death and Sacrifice of Chriſt, is an agreed Point between you and me, and is a Matter too plain to be doubted of or deny'd. And it is generally believ'd and maintain'd by Chriſtians, that he did this by a Revelation from God, and agreeably to the original Conſtitution, Deſign and Intention of the Law itſelf, which having been intended only as a Figure and Type of the better Things to come, *i. e.* of Chriſt and the Goſpel Diſpenſation, was hereby to ceaſe and be aboliſhed for ever. Now whether in all this, St. *Paul* argued *ad Hominem* only againſt the *Jews*, as endeavouring upon political and prudential Principles to ſet aſide

that abſurd, tyrannical, blinding and enſlaving Law of his Country, or whether from the Truth of Things, and on the Foot of Revelation from God, I would appeal to his own Practice, and to the Practice of all the *Jewiſh* Proſelytes to Chriſtianity, during this Apoſtle's Life-time, and above ſixty Years after. Now, 'tis certain, that when St. *Paul* could not carry this Point of ſetting aſide and abrogating the ceremonial Law, he ſubmitted to it as long as he lived, as did all the *Jewiſh* Proſelytes in the Apoſtolical Times, and for many Years afterward. Now, here lies the great Difficulty, and the Queſtion ariſing upon it, is this; Upon what Principles did St. *Paul* act, while he ſo warmly oppoſes and declares againſt the ceremonial Law, and at the ſame Time ſubmitted to and comply'd with *it* as long as he liv'd, as did all his *Jewiſh* Converts to Chriſtianity? Had this Law been originally a *divine Inſtitution* in the modern Senſe, or a Matter of immediate Inſpiration, Revelation or Command from God, it muſt neceſſarily have bound the Conſcience, as a Law of Righteouſneſs, or Means of Acceptance and Juſtification with God; and nothing could have diſſolv'd ſuch an Obligation, but a formal, direct Repeal and Abrogation of the Law by a new Revelation. But, that this ceremonial Law never had any ſuch Repeal or Abrogation, is plain, from the Practice of St. *Paul* himſelf and all the other Apoſtles, with all their *Jewiſh* Proſelytes, who continued zea-

lous of the Law and obey'd it in all its Parts, as much after their Converſion to Chriſtianity as before. But, 'tis certain, that St *Paul* did not comply with the Law as a Law of Righteouſneſs, or as binding the Conſcience in Point of Religion and Acceptance with God, nor would he ever own or ſubmit to any ſuch Obligation. And this was a Point which he always ſtood upon, and would never depart from it, either among the *Jews* or *Gentiles*. St. *Paul*, therefore, ſubmitted to this Law only in a civil or political Capacity, as the Law of his Country, and not as immediately, directly and in a ſtrict Senſe, the Law of God, in which Caſe, it muſt certainly have bound his Conſcience in Point of Religion, juſtifying Righteouſneſs or divine Acceptance. And this was the ſtanding Controverſy between St. *Paul* and the Apoſtles and Teachers of the Circumciſion, who obey'd the Law as a Law of Righteouſneſs, or as a neceſſary Part of Religion and Means of Juſtification with God. And they were, with great Difficulty, brought into any farther Allowances or Favour, with regard to the *Gentile* Converts. In ſhort, St. *Paul* might have very good and juſtifiable Reaſons for ſubmitting to the Law of Ceremonies, in his political Capacity, as the Law of his Country, and as a Matter of human Liberty. But had he thought it an original, immediate, poſitive Inſtitution from God, and afterwards null'd and abrogated by the ſame Authority, he could not have ſubmitted to it, conſiſtent with his de-

clared Judgment and Conſcience. How this Matter ſtood in St. *Paul*'s Time, and during the Apoſtolical Age, you may ſee in *Acts* xv. and xxi. The Caſe, in ſhort, was this: *Paul* and *Barnabas* having for ſome Time preach'd the Goſpel at *Antioch* and other Parts adjacent, and having converted conſiderable Numbers both of the *Jews* and *Gentiles* to the Chriſtian Faith, the *Jewiſh* Converts with great Warmth and Zeal, raiſed a Controverſy, which had like to have ſtopt the Progreſs of Chriſtianity in its very Beginning, and prevented any poſſible Coalition of *Jews* and *Gentiles* in the Chriſtian Church. For they inſiſted on it, that the *Gentile* Proſelytes ought to be circumciſed, and obey the Law of *Moſes* as much as themſelves, and that without this they could not be ſaved, or receive any Benefit by Chriſt and the Goſpel. *Paul* and *Barnabas* not being able to ſilence theſe Clamours, or to ſatisfy the two contrary and contending Parties, were ſent up to *Jeruſalem* by the Churches in thoſe Parts, there to conſult with the reſt of the Apoſtles and Elders at the Fountain Head, and to make a final Deciſion of this Grand Queſtion. Being come to *Jeruſalem*, they report the Matter of their Embaſſy; upon which a general Council of all the Apoſtles and Elders was call'd together, in which after much Debate, they came to this Reſolution, as from the Dictates of the Holy Ghoſt, That the *Gentile* Converts ſhould not be obliged to be circumciſed, or to obey the Law of *Moſes* after the Manner

of the *Jewiſh* Proſelytes, but only to abſtain from Fornication, from Things offered to Idols, from Things ſtrangled and from Blood; but that in other Matters they were to continue ſubject to the Laws of their ſeveral Countries, which were not thought inconſiſtent with Chriſtianity. And this Decree was regiſtred and ſent about in circular Letters to the Churches accordingly. But this did not put an End to St. *Paul*'s Troubles and Perſecutions in propagating the Goſpel; and indeed, that great Apoſtle of our Religion ſeems not to have been intirely ſatisfy'd with the Decree of the *Jeruſalem* Council juſt now mentioned, tho' he himſelf had been perſonally preſent in it. For at his next Return to *Jeruſalem*, not many Years after, when he had been preaching up and down in the ſeveral Towns and Cities of the *Leſſer Aſia*, he had a weightier Accuſation brought againſt him, than what he had been charged with before, and from which the Apoſtles, Elders and Brethren then at *Jeruſalem*, could not ſo well acquit him upon the Decree of their former Council. That Council, as I obſerv'd, had exempted the *Gentile* Converts from any Obligation to the *Moſaick*, ceremonial Law, and left them to the Laws of their own Countries, excepting thoſe few neceſſary Things already mentioned; but they did not think fit to diſcharge the *Jews* upon their Proſelytiſm from any of thoſe ceremonial Laws, which, being the Law of their Country, they were as much bound by,

by, as before their Converſion to Chriſtianity. After this Decree of the Apoſtolical Council at *Jeruſalem*, St. *Paul* and *Barnabas*, with *Silas* and *Judas*, or *John Mark*, were ſent again into *Aſia Minor*, with the circular Letters from the Council, containing their Reſolutions and Deciſion of the Matter in Debate. They were well received at *Antioch*, *Corinth*, and other Places thereabout, and both the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* Converts ſeem'd well ſatisfy'd with that Decree and reſolved to abide by it. But as I obſerv'd, St. *Paul* did not ſeem to have been perfectly well ſatisfy'd with that Decree, or did not think they had gone far enough. He ſaw plainly that this joining of two contrary and inconſiſtent Religions would never do, and could ſerve only to continue and propagate the old Superſtition and Slavery. It was clearly his Opinion, that all the Converts to Chriſtianity without the Boundaries of *Judea*, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*, ought to be exempted from any Obligation to the *Jewiſh*, ceremonial Law. And therefore in his preaching up and down in ſeveral Towns and Cities of the *Aſiatick* and *European Greece*, he ventures to advance a new Doctrine of his own. Wherever he came into the *Jewiſh* Synagogues, and where there was always a mix'd Multitude of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, he endeavour'd to convince the *Jews*, that the ceremonial Law of *Moſes* could be no farther binding upon any ſuch *Jews* as ſhould embrace Chriſtianity, being out of the Confines of *Judea*, and

and under the Protection of other States, for that the *Jewish* Sacrifices and ceremonial Law, having been only figurative and typical of the great Christian Sacrifice, must consequently be null'd, abolish'd and done away by the Sacrifice and Death of Christ, the only true Propitiation for Sin, and consequently could be no longer obliging to the *Jews* any more than to the *Gentiles*, after they had embraced Christianity; who were now both together to form a new, spiritual Society, not under the Jurisdiction of *Moses*, but of Christ alone. That this was St. *Paul*'s Doctrine in all his Epistles to, and Ministry among the foreign Churches, is too plain to be deny'd. But how he came off with it, or what the Consequences were when he came to make his Report of it to the rest of the Apostles and Elders at *Jerusalem*, I shall now relate. This strange Doctrine, so abhorrent to the *Jews*, and so inconsistent with the Law of *Moses*, had raised such popular Uproars and Insurrections in the several Towns and Cities where the Apostle had preach'd it, that he found himself under a Necessity of repairing once more to *Jerusalem*, there to advise with the rest of the Apostles, together with the Elders and Brethren, under such an Exigence, what was farther to be done for the Propagation of the Gospel. But when he came to *Jerusalem*, he found many of the *Asiatick Jews*, who having got the Start of him, had been there and made their Report before him. These *Asiaticks* arriving

riving before St. *Paul* had fully appriz'd the *Jeruſalem Jews*, that this Apoſtle in all the Synagogues where he had preach'd in *Aſia Minor*, had abſolv'd the *Jewiſh* Converts from all Obligation to the *Moſaick* Law, eſpecially the ceremonial Law, from a Pretence, that this Law having been only typical and figurative, was aboliſh'd, done away, and the whole End of it anſwered by the Death of Chriſt. That this Charge was true in Fact, and too plain to be denied, is evident from all St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles ſtill extant. He had preach'd the ſame Doctrines at *Corinth*, *Epheſus*, *Coloſs*, *Philippi*, and wherever he came. What then was to be done? How was this Matter to be got over? Not by denying the Fact, for that could not be done with any Appearance of Truth or Reaſon. Therefore the Apoſtle adviſing upon this Occaſion with the other Apoſtles, Elders and Brethren at *Jeruſalem*, they put him into this evaſive Method, by which he might ſave himſelf at leaſt, if he could not ſupport the Cauſe, as they had projected it. They remind him in the firſt Place, of the Decree of the *Jeruſalem* Council, in which he himſelf had been preſent not many Years before, in which it was reſolv'd, to lay no farther Burthen upon the *Gentile Converts*, than a few Things which were thought neceſſary by the *Holy Ghoſt* and *them*, to avoid the Appearance of Idolatry, and that the *Gentile* Proſelytes might not ſeem to countenance the Temple Worſhip of the Heathens:

thens: But then they left the *Jewiſh* Converts under an Obligation to the whole Law of *Moſes*, being ſtill the Law of God to them as before. They obſerve to him farther, that from the great Concourſe of People then in *Jeruſalem*, and eſpecially of the *Aſiaticks*, it would be impoſſible to prevent the Gathering of the People, or a popular Tumult and Inſurrection, upon their hearing that he was come to Town, unleſs he ſhould do ſomething very popular and remarkable to take off the Credit of theſe Reports, ſince the many Thouſands which he ſaw converted in *Judea* were all *zealous of the Law*, and obſerv'd every Branch of it as they did before, in Conformity to the Decree of the Apoſtolical Council. They inform him, therefore, that they had then four Men, new Converts to Chriſtianity, who were under the Vow of *Nazarites*, according to the ſtricteſt Manner of the *Jewiſh* Law; and they adviſe him to go into the Temple with theſe Men, to purify himſelf, to ſhave his Head, to offer his Sacrifice, and thereby to comply with the Law in the ſtricteſt Senſe, which might poſſibly give the Populace another Turn, quiet and appeaſe the People, and take off the Imputation which had ſo enraged the Rabble. The Apoſtle comply'd with this Advice, but this would not do; for the popular Clamour, Tumult and Inſurrection ſo much fear'd, happened, notwithſtanding all this Precaution. For tho' St. *Paul*, according to the Advice of the Apoſtles and Elders at *Jeruſalem*, took

thoſe

thoſe Men, went into the Temple with them, and there purify'd himſelf as a *Nazarite*, in Compliance with the Law, *Numb.* vi. 2 — 21. yet towards the End of this Purification, the Populace roſe upon them with this Cry, *Men of* Iſrael, *help*; *this is the Man that teacheth all Men every where againſt the People, and the Law, and this Place. Moreover, he has brought* Grecians *into the Temple, and has polluted this holy Place.* Upon which popular Uproar and Clamour, the Apoſtle had been torn in Pieces, had not the chief Captain been preſently notify'd of it, and ſent a Band of Soldiers to reſcue him from the Mob, and ſecure him in the Caſtle. *Lyſias*, the chief Captain, having thus ſecured the Apoſtle againſt the Outrage of the Rabble and Clergy who were gathered about them, ſuffered him, upon his Requeſt, to ſpeak to the Populace. In which Harangue, he gives an Account of his Converſion in his Way to *Damaſcus*, by Chriſt's appearing to him in a Viſion or Trance, after he had been a zealous Perſecutor of this new Religion. Upon his coming to *Damaſcus* he met there with one *Ananias*, a zealous, *Jew*, but a Chriſtian Convert, who baptiz'd him into the Chriſtian Faith and Profeſſion, and then ſent him back again to *Jeruſalem*. At the Apoſtle's coming thither, he ſaw *Jeſus* again in a Viſion or Trance, while he was worſhipping in the Temple. And he was then told by Chriſt, who appear'd to him in this Trance, that he was not to tarry in the City where the People would

would not receive his Teſtimony, or believe his Report, but that he [*Chriſt*] who then had appear'd to, and ſpoke with him, would ſend him far off from thence to the *Gentiles*. St. *Paul* having given this Account of his Converſion before *Lyſias* the chief Captain, and the *Jewiſh* high-Church Mob; upon his naming the *Gentiles*, and his Commiſſion to ſave them, they had no longer Patience, but preſently cry'd out, *Away with ſuch a Fellow from the Earth, it is not fit that he ſhould live. And as they cryed and caſt off their Clothes, and threw Duſt into the Air*, the chief Captain remanded him back to Priſon, and commanded him to be examined and ſcourged, that he might know the Right of the Matter, what the Occaſion might be of ſuch an Inſurrection and Uproar. But the Execution of this Order put the chief Captain into a very great Conſternation and Fright, after the Apoſtle had told him that he was a *Roman*, or a Freeman of *Rome*. And therefore, upon underſtanding this, *Lyſias* releaſed his Priſoner, and the next Day ordered the *Jewiſh* Prieſts and Council to appear, and bring their Accuſations, that he might know what they had to charge him with. But at this Hearing nothing could be concluded, but a general Clamour and Confuſion happened upon St. *Paul*'s crying out, that he was apprehended and called in Queſtion for teaching and maintaining *the Reſurrection of the Dead*. This divided the *Phariſees* and *Sadducees*, one Party believing the Reſurrection

ſurrection and a future State, and the other not; by which St. *Paul* gain'd over the prevailing Part of the Aſſembly to his own Side, and laid the chief Captain under a Neceſſity of remitting him for a farther Hearing, to *Felix* the *Roman* Governor, and by which he eſcaped being murdered by the *Jews*; for which Purpoſe they had formed a Conſpiracy under an Oath, could they have procured another Hearing in the ſame Place, as they intended the next Day. *Lyſias*, upon Notice of this Conſpiracy, ſent away *Paul* with a ſtrong Guard into *Cæſarea* to *Felix* the *Roman* Governor, and with the Priſoner he ſent a Letter, the Copy of which was thus: Claudius Lyſias, *unto the moſt noble Governor* Felix, *ſendeth greeting*; *As this Man was taken of the* Jews, *and ſhould have been killed of them, I came upon them with the Gariſon and reſcued him, perceiving that he was a* Roman: *And when I would have known the Cauſe wherefore they accuſed him, I brought him forth into their Council: There I perceiv'd that he was accuſed of Queſtions of their Law, but had no Crime worthy of Death or of Bonds. And when it was ſhewed me, how that the* Jews *laid wait for the Man, I ſent him ſtraightway to thee, and commanded his Accuſers to ſpeak before thee the Things that they had againſt him. Farewel,* Acts xxiii. 26 --- 30. Upon this, the Apoſtle had a Hearing before *Felix*, where *Ananias* the High Prieſt, and the Elders, with *Tertullus* a good Orator, and a very artful cunning Fellow, were preſent to accuſe him. But the

the Apoſtle ſtood to it, and proved it before them all, that he had done nothing againſt the Law, or their ceremonial Temple Worſhip; that he had ſtrictly all along as a loyal *Jew* comply'd with the whole Law, and that they had nothing to charge him with, but his preaching *the Reſurrection of the Dead.* The Matter thus reſting, and not determined by *Felix*, St. *Paul* was impriſoned for two Years, till *Felix* being recall'd, *Feſtus* was ſent in his Place, before whom the Apoſtle had another Hearing, and made, in all Reſpects, the very ſame Defence, That he had offended in nothing againſt the Law, ſaving that he had maintained the Reſurrection, which the *Phariſees* themſelves alſo believ'd and confeſs'd. But *Feſtus* could no more fathom this Matter, or decide the Controverſy between *Paul* and the *Jews*, than *Lyſias* and *Felix* before him. And therefore *Agrippa* coming down about this Time to ſalute *Feſtus* upon his new Government, *Feſtus* acquaints the King with *Paul*'s Cauſe, and the great Tumults and popular Outrages that had happened in *Judea* about him. And the Governor informs the King, that upon a full and fair Hearing of *Paul*'s Cauſe, and ſuffering him to ſpeak for himſelf before all his Accuſers, he could find nothing criminal in him, as he might have ſuppoſed or expected from ſuch popular Violence and Clamours. They had nothing, ſaid *Feſtus* (*in a ſneering Way*) to charge him with, but *certain Queſtions of their own Superſtition, and about one*

one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul *affirmed to be alive. Festus*, in this Debate before him, willing to favour the *Jews*, had proposed to the Apostle, that he should go up to *Jerusalem*, and undergo a farther Trial and Examination there; but St. *Paul*, to avoid this Snare, appeal'd to *Cæsar*, to whom the Governor had referr'd him. Tho' the Apostle upon his former Appeal had been remitted to *Augustus*, and that Judgment could not be recall'd, yet King *Agrippa* on the Report of *Festus* was willing to hear so remarkable a Case, which had occasioned such Stirs and Tumults in *Judea*; and therefore on the Morrow, the King with the whole Court being sat in great Pomp and Solemnity, *Paul* the Prisoner was call'd to the Bar, and permitted to make his own Defence. But before the Prisoner began his Defence, the Governor opened the Cause with this Oration. *King* Agrippa, *and all Men that are present with us, you see this Man, about whom all the Multitude of the* Jews *have called upon me, both at* Jerusalem *and here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. Yet have I found nothing worthy of Death that he hath committed: Nevertheless, seeing he hath appealed to* Augustus, *I have determined to send him. Of whom I have no certain Thing to write unto my Lord; wherefore I have brought him forth unto you, and especially unto thee, King* Agrippa, *that after Examination had, I might have somewhat to write. For, me-*

thinks, it is unreaſonable to ſend a Priſoner, and not to ſhew the Cauſes laid againſt him, Acts xxv. 24---27. After this ſhort Oration of the Governor, very much in the Apoſtle's Favour, the King gave *Paul* to underſtand, that as he was now at Liberty and had no body to fear, it was expected he ſhould ſpeak for himſelf, and let them know the Truth of the Matter, and the Ground of all this popular Clamour and Uproar; for as he had appeal'd to *Cæſar*, and that Appeal had been accepted and granted, he need not now any longer keep himſelf upon Reſerve, or be under any Apprehenſions of the Malice of the *Jews*, ſince the *Romans* would certainly protect him againſt any Power whatever, or againſt the Superſtition of any Religion in the World, while he did not appear as a Criminal, and no body could charge him as an evil Doer. St. *Paul*, with this Liberty and Encouragement, being now ſecure under the Protection of the *Romans*, and having nothing farther to fear from the *Jews*, ſtretched forth the Hand and anſwered for himſelf. And in this Speech before *Feſtus* and *Agrippa*, one may find a remarkable Freedom and Openneſs, very different from what this Apoſtle had uſed hitherto, while he was apprehenſive of being try'd at *Jeruſalem*. For having declared the Innocence and Integrity of his Life, and his ſtrict Adherence to the Law of *Moſes* in all its Parts, and concerning which the *Jews* could have nothing to charge

charge him with; having, I say, declared this, as he had done in all his other Speeches and Defences, he now owns the main Point which had thus raised the Malice of the *Jews*, and brought on all this Persecution upon him, which was not for preaching *the Resurrection*, but *a Resurrection*, not the Resurrection of the Dead in general at the End of the World, which they themselves believ'd, but the Resurrection of *Jesus of Nazareth* as the first Fruits from the Dead, and the true and only Proof of a general Resurrection to eternal Life, which could be no otherwise obtained or hoped for but in the Name of *Jesus*, and by the Faith of his having been raised from the Dead. But the Apostle does not here own the Use and Application he had made of this Doctrine, which was the chief Matter of Complaint against him, and the Ground of all his Prosecutions by the *Jews*; namely, that in all their Synagogues where he had preach'd in *Greece* and *Asia Minor*, he had taught and maintain'd that the Law was accomplished, abrogated and done away by the Death and Resurrection of Christ; that in Christ, or under the Gospel Dispensation, there could be no Difference or Distinction between *Jew* and *Gentile*, and that as a Christian, or a Disciple of Christ, no Man was to regard or submit to any other Law in Point of Religion and Conscience, or as the Means of Acceptance with God, but the Law of Christ alone. That the Matter of this Charge was true and could not

be deny'd, is very plain, and therefore the Apoſtle's Buſineſs was to evade it, that he might not be try'd in *Judea*, where he knew the Offence muſt have been Capital. And this he very artfully effected in all the Proceſſes brought againſt him in *Judea*, either by dividing the *Jews* among themſelves, or poſſeſſing the *Roman* Judges in his Favour, or laſt of all, when he found himſelf very cloſely preſs'd, by appealing to *Cæſar*. This he had done two Years before, while *Felix* was Procurator of *Judea*, and who willing to oblige the *Jews*, had left *Paul* bound till now. In this Hearing and Defence, *Agrippa* and *Feſtus* were fully convinced of *Paul*'s Innocence and Integrity, that he had done nothing worthy of Death, that his moral Character was very clear and unſpotted, and that no Acts of Diſobedience or Diſconformity to the Law of his Country could be clearly prov'd or made out againſt him; and therefore they determined, without keeping him any longer a Priſoner there, to ſend him forthwith under ſafe Conduct to *Rome*, and for the greater Security of his Perſon to ſend him by Sea. The King and Governor at this Audience ſeem to have heard the Apoſtle with great Attention and Pleaſure, till he came to relate the Story of his Converſion, how he came to be convinced that Jeſus was riſen from the Dead, and in what Manner he receiv'd his Commiſſion from him to preach the Goſpel. And then *Feſtus* having no longer Patience, cry'd out with a loud

loud Voice, *Paul, thou art beſide theyſelf, much Learning hath made thee mad.* To whom the Apoſtle having made a modeſt Reply, to let the Governor know that he was not mad, but ſpake the Words of Truth and Soberneſs, he addreſſes himſelf again to the King, as to a Man perfectly acquainted with *Moſes* and the Prophets, well appriz'd of all the Cuſtoms and Uſages of the *Jews:* And he appeals to the King, whether *Moſes* and the Prophets had not foretold all this, that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer, and that he ſhould be the firſt that ſhould riſe from the Dead, and ſhould ſhew the true Light or Way to Salvation to the People and to the *Gentiles.* But the King did not ſeem to apprehend, or to be at all convinced, that *Moſes* and the Prophets had ever taught any ſuch Things, and conſequently, thought that St. *Paul* muſt underſtand theſe Writings in a very different Senſe from what he and others had always done. And therefore the King having juſt made this ſhort Reply in a very civil, but jeering Way, *Almoſt thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian,* or thou wouldeſt *fain perſuade me to be ſo,* he immediately broke up the Court, and reſolv'd to ſend *Paul* directly for *Rome,* ſince they could not tell what to make of him there. He appear'd to them as a Man of the ſtricteſt Honeſty and Integrity, but of a warm Imagination, and a little tainted with Enthuſiaſm, or too much inclined to be influenced by Dreams, Viſions, and ſupernatural Com-

munications. But *Agrippa* and *Feſtus* could not judge of ſuch Matters, and thought they would not admit of proper Evidence in a Court of Judicature, and were therefore glad to rid their Hands of ſuch a Priſoner. And now having related to you the plain and real Matter of Fact as it ſtood at that Time, what Doctrines the Apoſtle taught, what was the chief Ground of his Perſecutions, and how he behaved himſelf hereupon towards the *Jews*, I would here ſettle the Account with you, Whether St. *Paul*, as a wiſe and good Man, muſt be juſtify'd upon your Principles or mine?

Theoph. Taking the Matter as you have repreſented it, I muſt confeſs, I cannot yet ſee how this Apoſtle's Conduct can be juſtify'd upon any Principles at all, either yours or mine. I think you have brought the Apoſtle into a very great Dilemma, but cannot imagine how you will bring him out again; for according to your Account of him, he was neither a *Jew* nor a *Chriſtian*, but ſometimes one, and ſometimes the other, as Occaſion ſerv'd, that by this Temporizing in Religion he might pleaſe both Sides, or at leaſt give as little Offence as poſſible.

Philal. The Account I have given of St. *Paul* is exactly agreeable to all the Memoirs of his Life, which are ſtill extant in his own genuine Epiſtles, and the Hiſtory of the *Acts*; and therefore you muſt take the Matter of Fact as it ſtands, ſince it is not in your Power

or mine to alter it. But as to St. *Paul*'s Temporizing in Religion, I think, you are quite miſtaken, and that this great Apoſtle always acted upon the ſame ſteady, uniform Principles of Religion, whether he was in *Judea*, *Greece*, *Aſia*, *Arabia*, *Egypt*, or any where elſe. St. *Paul* was a *Jew* by Nation, and could not refuſe Obedience to the Law of his Country, as long as that Law ſubſiſted, and he continued a Subject. But then, you muſt obſerve, that St. *Paul*'s Scheme of *Judaiſm* was very different from the common National Scheme, and even from the Notions which the reſt of the Apoſtles, Elders and Brethren in that famous Council at *Jeruſalem* had of it: And this is ſo very plain, that one would think, Men muſt wilfully ſhut their Eyes not to ſee it. The Truth is, that St. *Paul* was the great Free-thinker of his Age, the bold and brave Defender of Reaſon againſt Authority, in Oppoſition to thoſe who had ſet up a wretched Scheme of Superſtition, Blindneſs and Salvery, contrary to all Reaſon and common Senſe; and this under the ſpecious, popular Pretence of a divine Inſtitution and Revelation from God. But our truly Chriſtian Apoſtle continually laboured under this great Diſadvantage, of being oppoſed in all his Miniſtry by the whole *Jewiſh* Nation, and having a Decree of Council ſtanding out againſt him, paſs'd at *Jeruſalem* by a large Aſſembly of Apoſtolical Chriſtian *Jews*; yet he ſtill ſtood to his Point, and

would never admit of the Obligation of the Law, as the Law of God, or as any way binding in Point of Religion and Conſcience. And herein St. *Paul* had not one Apoſtle, Prophet or Teacher of that Age, who heartily join'd in with him, except *Timothy*, whom he always called his Son, his Fellow-Labourer, and his faithful Helper in Chriſt. And tho' *Peter*, *Barnabas*, *John Mark*, and perhaps ſome few others, joined with *Paul* in preaching the Goſpel for a Time, yet they all fell off from him afterwards, upon this very Quarrel, becauſe they could not agree to abſolve the *Jewiſh* Converts from their Obedience to the Law, as the Law of God, or as a Matter of Religion and Conſcience. But beſides this, upon the Converſion of the Heathen or idolatrous *Gentiles*, *Paul* had another very material Difference with *Peter* and the reſt of the Apoſtles, concerning the Proſelytiſm of the Gate: A Queſtion, which at that Time very nearly affected the Peace of the Church, with reſpect to the Terms upon whieh the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* Converts were to take one another as Brethren, and hold Communion or Fellowſhip with each other. The Matter of Fact ſtood thus: The Goſpel having been preach'd for about ſeven Years together, to the *Jews* only, *Peter* was now inform'd, by the Viſion of the Sheet let down from Heaven, that God deſign'd to take in the Proſelytes of the Gate alſo, as Perſons ſufficiently qualified for the Kingdom of Heaven, without any farther

Compliance with the Law of *Moſes*. Accordingly *Peter* immediately went to *Cornelius*, who had juſt then ſent for him, and having converted him and his Company to the Faith of Chriſt, the Holy Ghoſt fell upon them, and they were baptized; there being then ſeveral Converts of the Circumciſion accompanying *Peter*, who were Witneſſes to what had happened to theſe devout *Gentiles*, or Proſelytes of the Gate. But an Account of this being ſoon carried to the Church at *Jeruſalem*, who were all Converts of the Circumciſion, they unanimouſly condemned and cenſured *Peter* for eating and drinking, and holding an intimate, friendly Communion with Men that were uncircumciſed. Upon which *Peter*, to juſtify himſelf, gave them a full Account of the whole Matter, of the Revelation that was made to him, and of the Angel, who at the ſame Time had ordered *Cornelius* to ſend for him from *Joppa* to *Cæſarea*, the Meſſengers coming to the Houſe while he was in this Viſion or Trance; and that upon his going with the Meſſengers, *Cornelius*, and thoſe that were with him, receiving the Faith of Chriſt, the Holy Ghoſt fell upon them, as it had done on themſelves, and the Converts of the Circumciſion at the Beginning; ſo that from the whole Matter, he could not deny them Baptiſm and brotherly Fellowſhip, they having had the ſame Marks and Teſtimony of God's Approbation and Acceptance, as they themſelves had. The Apoſtles and Brethren

thren at *Jeruſalem*, being ſatisfied with this Account, confirm'd by ſix Men whom *Peter* had brought with him, and who had been Witneſſes to the whole Affair, they came into the ſame Meaſures, and reſolv'd, for the future, to preach the Goſpel to the Proſelytes of the Gate, and to receive them as Brethren. And accordingly, from this Time, for eight Years forward, or to the Year 45, the Goſpel was preach'd over all *Paleſtine*, *Phœnicia* and *Syria*, both to the *Syriac* and *Helleniſt Jews* and Proſelytes, and no Diſpute aroſe in the Churches about brotherly Love, Fellowſhip, or Communion. But this Year *Paul* having been own'd and recogniz'd as an Apoſtle by the Church of *Antioch* in *Syria*, he entered upon the Execution of that Office, which he had never done before, but acted only as a Prophet or Teacher. But now he ſet out with *Barnabas*, and travelled thro' the *Leſſer Aſia*, where he preach'd the Faith of Chriſt at *Antioch* in *Piſidia*, *Iconium*, *Lyſtra*, and many other Places, not only to the *Jews* and Proſelytes, but to the idolatrous *Gentiles* alſo: Among whom, having made great Numbers of Converts, and ſettled many Churches, he returns to *Antioch* in *Syria*, where he now went on with the ſame Work, preaching the Goſpel of Chriſt, and Salvation by him alone, to the Heathens. This was about the Beginning of the Year 48, when *Paul* returning from *Aſia Minor*, preach'd this Doctrine in *Syria* ſo near the Borders of *Judea*. But this

this occaſioned very great Troubles and Commotions in the Church, and was like to have produced a Schiſm never to be healed. For tho' the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians, upon the Revelation formerly made to *Peter*, had receiv'd the Proſelytes of the Gate into their Communion, who had purged themſelves from Idolatry, according to the Law of *Moſes*, before; yet they did not think that they could thus receive the whole *Gentile* World without any legal Qualification at all. Nay, the moſt zealous of them, upon this Quarrel, raiſed their Demands higher than ever, and inſiſted on it, that the Heathen Idolaters could not be receiv'd into the Church upon the ſame Terms with the Proſelytes of the Gate; but that they muſt firſt be made Proſelytes of Righteouſneſs, that is, be circumciſed, and ſubmit to the whole Law, before they could receive them into the Chriſtian Communion, and own them as Brethren. Now, this was a Queſtion of the laſt Importance, as it related to the eſſential Conſtitution of the Church, and the Terms upon which the ſeveral Converts to Chriſtianity were to hold Communion with one another: And therefore, it was thought neceſſary, before the Matter was grown deſperate, to appeal to *Jeruſalem*, and lay the Matter before the Apoſtles, Elders and Brethren there; which was accordingly done in the Year 49. Upon this Occaſion, *Paul* and *Barnabas*, with certain others, were ſent up from *Antioch* to *Jeruſalem*, where the Apoſtles,

poſtles, Elders and Brethren, being convened in full Council, after great Heats and Debates upon the Queſtion, came at length to this unanimous Vote, Reſolution, or Decree, That no other or greater Burthen ſhould be laid upon thoſe, who from among the *Gentiles* had been turned to God, but theſe few *neceſſary Things*, namely, that they ſhould abſtain from *Fornication*, from *Things offered to Idols*, from *Things ſtrangled*, and from *Blood*. And accordingly, circular Letters were writ by Order of the Council, and ſent to all the Churches abroad, where there had been any Converts made from the idolatrous *Gentiles*, and who were now obliged, upon theſe Terms, to hold Communion with the converted *Jews*. The *Gentile* Converts were to ſubmit to the Law of Proſelytiſm, as the Proſelytes of the Gate had done for ten Years before; and the Chriſtian *Jews* were to receive and communicate with them as Brethren and Fellow Chriſtians, upon this legal Condition alone, without laying them under any farther Obligations to the Law. Upon receiving theſe Letters, containing the Decree or Reſolution of the Council, the Church of *Antioch*, and all the other foreign Churches, where *Jews* and *Gentiles* had been mix'd, were perfectly ſatisfied; they glorified God for ſo happy a Pacification, and gladly join'd in brotherly Communion with each other. But then, it is here manifeſt, that the *Jeruſalem* Council enjoin'd this Law of Proſelytiſm upon the *Gentile*

Gentile Converts as *neceſſary*, or as a Matter of *Religion and Conſcience*, without which, the Chriſtian *Jews* could not be juſtify'd in communicating with them, or receiving them as Brethren. But this ſoon occaſioned freſh Troubles and Diſturbances in the Church; for St. *Paul* could never ſubmit to the Impoſition of this Law of Proſelytiſm upon his *Gentile* Converts; at leaſt, not in the Senſe of the Council, *as neceſſary*, as *a Matter of Religion*, or as the Law of God, upon the Authority of *Moſes:* Tho' yet he allow'd them to comply with it occaſionally, as a Matter of Liberty, and for the Sake of Peace, to ſatisfy theſe Chriſtian *Jews*, and to prevent an open Rupture with them, while they were mix'd together in the ſame Church-Societies, and oblig'd to mutual Communion. And here, we ſee, how it came about, that Things in their own Nature indifferent, were, in the Opinion and Decree of this Council, connected and enjoined with Things morally neceſſary, as of equal Force and Obligation, in Point of Religion and Conſcience, with the eternal, immutable Law of Nature. Some learned Men have mightily perplex'd themſelves, and made very ſtrange Sppoſitions to account for this; and yet the Caſe is very plain, for admitting this Law of Proſelytiſm to have been the Law of God given by *Moſes*, and not yet abrogated or repealed, which was certainly ſo in the Judgment of the *Jeruſalem* Council; it muſt follow, that all the Parts of it muſt be equally

equally binding in Point of Religion and Conſcience; and Men cannot be left at Liberty, with regard to the Laws of God, to obey ſome as neceſſary, and reject others as indifferent, becauſe ſome of them may be natural, and others poſitive. For where the Authority enjoining, and Evidence of Promulgation are the ſame, the Obligation of the Law muſt be the ſame; or otherwiſe poſitive Laws could have no Force at all, but Men would be left, with regard to poſitive Laws, to receive or reject, to obey or diſobey them at Diſcretion, and juſt as they may think fit or convenient, with reſpect to their other Intereſts. And therefore, as the Apoſtles, Elders and Brethren at *Jeruſalem*, urged this Law of Proſelytiſm upon the *Gentile* Converts, as the Law of *Moſes*, concerinng the Manner in which Men ought to ſeparate from Idolaters, and purge themſelves from Idolatry; it is plain, that they could make no Diſtinction between the natural and poſitive Parts of it, without giving up the Authority of the whole Law, as a Revelation from God. The great concerning Debate, therefore, of that Time, was reduced to theſe two Queſtions: Firſt, Whether the *Jewiſh* Converts were ſtill obliged, in Point of Religion and Conſcience, to obey the whole Law? And, ſecondly, Whether the *Gentile* Converts, as a Matter of Religion and Conſcience, were bound to comply with the *Moſaick* Law of Proſelytiſm, as the neceſſary Condition upon which the Chriſtian

Jews

Jews were to hold Communion with them? In both these Points the Apostles, Elders and Brethren at *Jerusalem*, in Consequence of their Decree, stood to the Affirmative, while *Paul* as stifly maintain'd the Negative against them, declaring, that he had receiv'd this, not from Man or by any intermediate Coveyance, but by immediate Revelation. This Controversy continued all St. *Paul*'s Life-Time, that is, from the Year 49, in which the Decree past, to the Year 68, when St. *Paul* was martyr'd at *Rome*. This Controversy at length rose so high, that the rest of the Apostles, not excepting *Peter*, *Barnabas*, and *John Mark*, not being able to come into St. *Paul*'s Scheme, thought themselves obliged to separate from him, and leave him to preach his *own Gospel*, as he call'd it, among the *Gentiles*, in his *own Way*. And though St. *Paul* still insisted upon immediate Revelation for this, yet the rest of the Apostles, it seems, never had any such Revelation, nor could *Paul* ever convince them. Nor could this Point of Difference between them be determined by Miracles, for *Peter* wrought as many and great Miracles as *Paul*, and therefore upon any such Proof, the Evidence must have been equal on both Sides; or perhaps St. *Paul* having all the rest against him, might have been very much distanced as to any Proof from Miracles. Upon the Whole, I think, it is evident from all the Memoirs of this great Apostle's Life, which are still extant among us in the History of the *Acts*, and his

own

own genuine Epiſtles, that all his Sufferings and Perſecutions all along, aroſe from his ſtruggling as much as poſſible for natural Right and Reaſon, againſt the Superſtition of the Chriſtian *Jews*, and their pretended religious Obligations to the Law of *Moſes*, which they thought themſelves ſtill as much obliged by as before.

Theoph. St. *Paul* then, it ſeems, preach'd another and a quite different Goſpel from what was preach'd by *Peter* and the other Apoſtles. Nay, as you will have it, they differed about the moſt eſſential and concerning Points, as they muſt have been at that Time, the fundamental Terms of Communion, and the Method of propagating and ſettling the Goſpel at firſt. But this being ſuppoſed, it is impoſſible they ſhould have been all inſpired, or under the infallible Direction of the Holy Ghoſt.

Philal. There was no Pretence in thoſe Apoſtolical Times to any Spirit or Holy Ghoſt, that made Men either infallible or impeccable, that ſet Men above the Poſſibility of erring or being deceiv'd themſelves, as to the inward Judgment, or of deceiving others in the outward Sentence and Declaration of that Judgment. This was the wild and impudent Claim of the Church of *Rome* in after Ages, which the Apoſtles themſelves, who really had the Holy Ghoſt and the Power of working Miracles, never pretended to. And tho' this has been liberally granted them, and ſuppoſed of them

them by our Chriſtian Zealots and Syſtem-mongers, yet it is what they never claim'd; and their Differences among themſelves about the moſt concerning Points of Revelation, and Method of propagating the Goſpel, is an evident Demonſtration to the contrary, inſomuch that had they pretended to any ſuch Thing, they muſt openly, and in the Face of the whole World, have contradicted themſelves in Fact. They who in the Apoſtolical Times had theſe extraordinary Gifts and Powers, were left at Liberty to exerciſe them upon the common Principles of Reaſon and human Prudence; and from hence we find that ſome made a right Uſe of them for Edification, while others employ'd them only to ſerve the Purpoſes of Emulation and Strife, which introduced great Confuſions and Diſorders among them. And this is an evident Proof that the Perſons veſted with ſuch extraordinary Gifts and Powers, were neither infallible nor impeccable, that is, they were not hereby made uncapable either of deceiving others, or of being deceiv'd themſelves. But what makes this ſtill plainer, that the Power of working Miracles had no Connection with the Truth of the Doctrines taught by ſuch Miracle-Workers, is this, that falſe Prophets, and the moſt wicked Seducers might and did work Miracles, which they could not have done had Miracles been any Evidence or Proof of Truth and ſound Doctrine. Beſides, I muſt maintain it, that whatever Certainty God may

convey to a Man's Mind by Inſpiration, or immediate Revelation, the Knowledge of any ſuch Truth can go no farther upon divine Authority, or as a Matter of divine Faith, than to the Perſon or Perſons thus inſpired, or to whom the original Revelation is made; and whoever afterwards receives it from them, muſt take it upon their ſole Credit and Authority, and not upon a divine Teſtimony or upon the Authority of God. If another Man upon my Teſtimony, ſhould believe that I have a Revelation from God about a Thing, that could not otherwiſe have been known or found out, he believes in me and not in God, unleſs God ſhould in like Manner reveal to him, that he had made ſuch a prior Revelation to me; and then my Teſtimony, or the Proof of my prior Revelation, would be needleſs to him. I ſhall endeavour to make this plain by an Inſtance, which will come up exactly to the Purpoſe. If a Body be whirled about a Centre, it will acquire by ſuch a Circumvolution a centrifugal Force, that is, a continual Niſus, or Endeavour in every Part of the Periphery to fly off from the Centre of Motion in the Tangent Lines. And this Force generated in a given Time, will be always equal to the Square of the Arch deſcribed in the Time given, divided by the Diameter of the Circle about which the Body revolves. The Truth of this Propoſition, *Theophanes*, you and I are demonſtratively certain of; that is, we know it by perceiving

perceiving the natural, neceſſary Relation and Connection of the Ideas themſelves; and in Conſequence we are able to convey the ſame Certainty to as many others, as will be at the Pains of conſidering and comparing the Ideas. But let us ſuppoſe, that another Man, who knew nothing, and could know nothing of it as a Truth neceſſarily founded in Nature, ſhould be inſpired with it, or have it immediately reveal'd to him from God: And he would then be as certain of it as you or I can be, becauſe he would connect the certain Truth of the Propoſition, with the neceſſary Veracity of God. But then his Certainty would not be of the ſame Nature or Kind with yours or mine, becauſe one would be naturally communicable, and the other not. He could not convince any other Man not thus inſpired, that he had any ſuch Revelation from God; but whoever ſhould receive it from him muſt take his own Word for it, and depend properly upon his Authority, and not upon the Authority of God; unleſs he could make it appear, that he was both infallible and impeccable in the Caſe, and that he could neither be deceiv'd himſelf, nor deceive others. And this is ſo much the Prerogative of God alone, that I doubt it will never be prov'd of any other. In ſhort, he who communicates a natural Truth, gives another Man the ſame Evidence for it, that he himſelf had; and he who communicates a Truth in Fact, does it upon his own Credit

and Authority, in which he expects to be believ'd upon such Grounds of Probability, as he is able to produce for it: But for a Man to convey a Truth in Fact upon the Authority of God, is most absurd and impossible. If God speaks to me immediately and directly, I believe him upon his own Authority, without any human Interpositions; but if a Man speaks to me as from God, I must take his Word for it, unless he could prove to me the natural Reasonableness or Fitness of the Thing, and then I should take it, indeed, as coming from God, but not upon any human Authority at all. In a Word, there can be no such Thing as divine Faith upon human Testimony; and this absurd Supposition has been the Ground of all the Superstition and false Religion in the World.

Theoph. You are very positive in this Point; but may not, I beseech you, an original, divine Testimony be convey'd to us by a human Testimony?

Philal. Not, with Submission, as a Matter of divine Faith, because all that human Testimony is liable to Error, unless it can be prov'd that the Things testify'd are naturally or morally true, reasonable and fit; and then we receive them upon those natural Reasons or moral Fitnesses of the Things themselves, and not upon the Testimony at all.

Theoph. All that I mean is, that we may believe upon Tradition or human Testimony, that this or that Revelation has in former Ages been

been made from God to Mankind, and that we may have very good and ſufficient Reaſons for ſuch Belief. A Matter of Revelation is as capable of being convey'd down to Poſterity upon Tradition and human Teſtimony, as any other Matter of Fact of what Nature or Kind ſoever. And therefore you muſt either allow this, or reject all hiſtorical Evidence of every other Kind.

Philal. But what I muſt inſiſt upon is this, that you can aſſign no Reaſon or Proof of any Revelation, as coming from God, but what will prove at the ſame Time, that the Matter of ſuch a Revelation was morally fit and reaſonable in the Nature of the Thing, antecedent to, and abſtracted from any ſuch Tradition or human Teſtimony; and conſequently, that your Tradition or human Teſtimony is here brought in to no Manner of Purpoſe and without Effect. I grant, that we may be probably aſſured from Tradition and human Teſtimony, what our Fore-fathers believ'd about God and Religion, and what Reaſons they aſſign'd for it: But whether they ought to have believ'd as they did, or whether their Reaſons will hold good or not, is another Queſtion, concerning which your Tradition and human Teſtimony can never inform you. But the whole Truth of the Matter, is, I think, in ſhort, this: There is one, and but one certain and infallible Mark or Criterion of divine Truth, or of any Doctrine, as coming from God, which we are obliged

to comply with as a Matter of Religion and Conſcience: And that is the moral Truth, Reaſon or Fitneſs of the Thing itſelf, whenever it comes to be fairly propoſed to, and conſidered by, the Mind or Underſtanding. The Ways of conveying the Doctrines of Religion to the Mind of Man, and of procuring them a fair and equitable Conſideration, may be various and different; but the Ground or Reaſon of Reception and Belief is ſtill the ſame. And thus the ſame Truths, with the ſame Grounds and Reaſons of Belief, may be propoſed and convey'd to the Mind by Inſpiration, or immediate Revelation from God; by hiſtorical, traditional Evidence, informing us what religious Doctrines and Truths were received, and upon what Grounds and Reaſons, by the beſt and wiſeſt Men in former Ages; or, laſtly, by the Exerciſe of Mens natural Faculties, by which theſe Truths occurr'd to the Mind under the Evidence of their moral Reaſon or Fitneſs. Now, I ſay, that in whichſoever of theſe Ways the Doctrines and Truths of Religion are convey'd and propoſed to the Mind, their Evidence and Proof, as coming from God, muſt be ſtill the ſame, *i. e.* the moral, eternal Reaſon and Fitneſs of the Things themſelves. This Principle ſteadily adhered to and acted upon, would keep Mankind clear in Point of Religion, and prevent all Difficulties and Diſputes upon that Score. But till they come to this, their Underſtandings and Con-

Conſciences muſt be continually under the Influence and Direction of Enthuſiaſts or Impoſtors.

Theoph. I know I muſt indulge your Severity, becauſe, as I preſume, you cannot help it. Satire is as neceſſary to you as breathing, and you can no more talk without it, than you can live without your daily Bread or natural Food. But yet, with Submiſſion, I cannot ſee why God may not in particular Caſes, reveal certain Doctrines and Truths to Men, and give them ſufficient Proofs of it, as a Matter of Duty, without letting them into the Reaſons of his Commands, or making them wiſer than perhaps for the preſent they ought to be, or can be. You would not always think fit to give your own Children or Servants the Reaſons of all your Commands; and yet you would expect Obedience upon the common Principles of ſuperior Wiſdom, Right of commanding, paternal Affection, *&c.* Now, methinks, it is hard that God ſhould not have as much Right of commanding as Man has, or that he ſhould be more obliged to let his Children and Servants into the Reaſons of his Conduct, than a common Father or Maſter.

Philal. Your Reaſoning ſeems to be very juſt; but the Misfortune is, that the Caſes you put are not at all parallel. I hope you do not imagine that I am diſputing with you the Authority of God, or denying his Right of commanding, where the Command is firſt ſuppoſed or made evident. This is, indeed,

the Paralogiſm that Men commonly run into, when they are talking upon the Subject now in Debate. But the Queſtion is not, Whether the Commands of God once ſuppoſed or proved, ought to be obeyed or not, or whether our Wiſdom be ſuperior to God's? But how we ſhall know whether God has really commanded the Thing, or what Rule and Meaſure of Judgment we have in this Caſe, ſo as not to be liable to continual Deception and Error about it, and laying ourſelves open to all the Enthuſiaſm and Impoſture in the World? If you will keep to this Point, we ſhall ſoon bring the preſent Matter in Debate between us to an Iſſue; but if you will not keep to it, we ſhall never bring it to any Thing at all. And here, *Theophanes*, I expect fairer Dealing from you, than from the common Run of our enthuſiaſtick Pulpiteers, whoſe Manner it is always, firſt to beg the main Point in Queſtion, and then triumph upon it as a Thing prov'd. But to apply your Inſtance to the preſent Purpoſe, and to make it a parallel Caſe; ſuppoſe you were to write to another Perſon, and he to a third, and the third to a fourth, and ſo on to the hundredth or thouſandth Hand; which Orders were at laſt to come to your Family, as a Matter of Command and Direction from you, about ſomething of near Intereſt and Concern between you and your Family: Might they not upon ſuch an Occaſion reaſon thus; if the Maſter and Father

of

of the Family had intended any ſuch Thing, might he not have ſpoken to us in Perſon, or have ſent his Orders directly under his own Hand and Seal, which we are perfectly well acquainted with, and which he has always inſtructed us to regard and truſt to; and therefore what Reaſon can there be for his ſending an Order of ſuch Conſequence in this indirect and round-about Way? Beſides, here appears to be nothing in the Nature of the Command itſelf, that can induce one to believe that ever it came from our Father or Maſter. Here is a great Streſs laid upon Things which do not ſeem to concern his Intereſt or ours; he has often warned us to beware of ſuch Deceptions; we cannot depend upon all the Hands thro' which this has been convey'd to us, and therefore we will ſuſpend our Obedience and Actions upon it, till we know more of the Matter, and hear in a more direct and unexceptionable Way from the Maſter of the Family, which will be as ſoon as he himſelf pleaſes: And in the mean while, we know that he is too much concerned for us, and has too much Wiſdom and Goodneſs to leave us long in the Dark about it, or to make us ſuffer any Thing under ſuch a Doubt or Perplexity. Now, I beſeech you, could you blame your Children or Servants for this? Would you puniſh the Family for not obeying your Orders, whether they are probably and rationally convey'd or not? Or would you not rather approve

prove and reward them for ſuch a prudential Guard againſt Impoſition and Deception?

Theoph. The Queſtion then, it ſeems, is this, Whether any rational Proof can be given of a Command or Law from God, where God himſelf does not ſpeak to the Perſon immediately and directly; or where the moral Reaſon and Fitneſs of the Thing is not propoſed and manifeſted to the Perſon, or Perſons concern'd, at the ſame Time with the Law or Command?

Philal. This is exactly the Queſtion, and the only Thing to which I expect an Anſwer, if you would ſpeak to the Purpoſe.

Theoph. I muſt own there is a ſeeming Difficulty in this Caſe, which I cannot well get over at preſent, and therefore what I ſhall here ſay, muſt be with a Saving to farther Thoughts and Enquiry. I think, then, that a poſitive Command or Law, may be made probable, tho' not certain, as coming from God, where God does not ſpeak to Perſons directly and immediately, nor convey the moral Reaſon and Fitneſs of the Thing at the ſame Time. Suppoſe then, if you pleaſe, a certain Number of Perſons preaching the eternal, immutable Rules and Principles of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs to the World, againſt the ſtrongeſt Bias of the Age in which they live, againſt all the eſtabliſhed Doctrines and Religion of their Country, and againſt all the temporal Intereſts and moſt prevailing, governing Paſſions

of

of Mankind: In preaching theſe Doctrines they give up all their ſecular Hopes and Views, ſacrifice their Eſtates, their Liberties and their Lives, as a Teſtimony to the Truth, and as Things of no Value in Compariſon to the Glory of God, and the Happineſs of Mankind. At the ſame Time they work innumerable Miracles, the moſt uncontrolable, open, and in the Face of the whole Country; and this not for a Trial of Skill, or an Oſtentation of Power, but for the Good of Mankind, and as a Demonſtration of the Spirit of God with Power. They caſt out Devils, heal the Sick, raiſe the Dead, and cure all Manner of Diſeaſes; not by any Art or Skill in Magick, but by direct immediate Prayer to God, as a Teſtimony that God was with them, and that they did not this by their own Power or Skill, but by the Power of God, and in the Name of him whom they affirmed to be riſen from the Dead, by the ſame Almighty Power, which then appear'd and wrought in them. Now thus far, ſuppoſing the Truth of the Fact, every Thing is clear, and I would not thank you for a Conceſſion. But let us farther ſuppoſe, that theſe Men thus authoriz'd, and thus demonſtrating the Power and Wiſdom of God; let us ſuppoſe them, I ſay, delivering ſome Doctrines not evident in themſelves, or the moral Truth and Reaſon of which may not preſently appear to the Underſtandings of thoſe to whom they are propoſed, and who are concerned to believe

lieve and obey them. This is the hardeſt Suppoſition you can make of any poſitive Laws, ſo far as I am concerned in the Defence of them. Now, upon ſuch a Suppoſition, why may we not receive ſome Things of a poſitive and ritual Nature, as coming from God, as containing his Will concerning our Obedience, rationally and probably, tho' you may ſay, not certainly and demonſtratively? What Reaſon could Men, qualify'd and acting as before, have to deceive you? Or how is it probable that they ſhould be deceiv'd themſelves?

Philal. I think you have here put the Matter as ſtrong, and brought it as near to the Point in Debate as poſſible; and therefore, I ſhall ſuppoſe the ſame Things of theſe Men that you have done, and take it for granted, that the Fact is well prov'd. But then, as you do not ſuppoſe them to have been either infallible or impeccable, which cannot be prov'd; I cannot ſee why we ſhould take them upon Truſt in ſome Things, becauſe they have given us very good Credit upon others. So far as they give us the Teſtimonial of divine Authority, in the moral Truth and Righteouſneſs of the Doctrines themſelves, we are obliged to believe and receive theſe Doctrines, and cannot be miſtaken, whether the firſt Preachers and Promulgers had confirm'd them by Miracles, and the Holineſs of their Lives, or not. But where this fails, we can go no farther, unleſs Truth and Infallibility

fallibility be neceſſarily connected with the Power of working Miracles, or with the Holineſs of Mens Lives; which, I preſume, you will not affirm. Suppoſing it therefore ever ſo probable, that Men qualify'd and acting as before, can have no Deſign to deceive us, what Proof have you, that they are not themſelves miſtaken, when they go from the ſole Evidence in this Caſe, that ought to determine both them and us?

Theoph. This Argument is very pleaſant; I aſk and contend for a *Probability* which you do not deny; and you deny a *Certainty*, that I do not aſk or contend for. You commonly uſe to diſtinguiſh better, which would make one imagine, that you are a little pinch'd.

Philal. The Argument, I can aſſure you, is not yet brought to a Pinch; but what you ſeem to ſuppoſe here is, that becauſe Men are *certainly* in the Right in ſome Things, therefore it is probable, that they are not miſtaken in any Thing. If this be not what you aim at, *Theophanes*, I do not underſtand you; and if it is, you ought to explain yourſelf farther.

Theoph. I mean only this, that untainted unforfeited Credit is good, and that you ought to take it as a Matter of human Probability and Truſt, till you can aſſign ſome Reaſon to the contrary. If I have never deceiv'd you, where you have had the beſt Opportunites of examining the Matter, why ſhould you ſuſpect my Fidelity

lity in other Matters, especially where I can have no Interest in the Case?

Philal. But with Submission, the Question here is not, whether you would deceive me, but whether you are not mistaken yourself, or what Proof you can give to the contrary? Besides, tho' you have never deceiv'd me, where you could not, how does this make it probable, that you will not deceive me where you can? And if one had no Reason in this Case, to believe or disbelieve, the only rational Way would be to suspend the Judgment about it till farther Proof. But, to bring this Matter to some certain, determinate Issue. It is very well known, that there are, and always have been, two Sorts or Species of Religion in the World. The first is the Religion of Nature, which consisting in the eternal, immutable Rules and Principles of moral Truth, Righteousness or Reason, has been always the same, and must for ever be alike apprehended by the Understandings of all Mankind, as soon as it comes to be fairly proposed and considered. But besides this, there is another Sort or Species of Religion, which has been commonly call'd positive, instituted, or revealed Religion, as distinguish'd from the former. And to avoid Circumlocution, I shall call this the political Religion, or the Religion of the Hierarchy; in which I do not design to distinguish between one Sort of Clergy and another, because, in this Case, they are scarce distinguishable. But I would observe here, that by the political Re-

ligion, I do not mean the Religion which the Clergy believe, but the Religion which they have learn'd from their Creeds and Syſtems, and which in Conſequence they think themſelves bound in *Conſcience* or *Intereſt* to teach. Now, this political, hierarchical Religion, as it never was, or can be built upon any other Foundation, but *Tradition*, *Hiſtory* and *human Authority*, has been always different in different Ages and Countries. Nay, in the ſame Age and Country, and Church, Men could never agree about it, what is or is not in this Senſe Religion. From whence it muſt follow, that if this be Religion, Religion muſt be a mere perſonal Thing, and that no two Churches, nor even any two thinking Men in the World, are of the ſame *Religion*. If one was to reckon up all their different Opinions about the Nature, Perſon, and Offices of Chriſt, it muſt fill a large Volume, and contain a Collection of all the Creeds, Syſtems, and Schemes of Faith in the Chriſtian World. Some of them make Chriſt to be *God equal to the Father*, and damn and hereticate all who do not believe it; while others bring him down to a mere Man, and will not allow him to have had any Exiſtence prior to his Nativity or Incarnation. Some will have his Death to be a proper Atonement or Propitiation for the Sins of the World; while others explode and condemn this as abſurd, impoſſible, and contrary to the Perfections of God, to the Nature of Man, and to the neceſſary

ceſſary Reaſon and moral Fitneſs of Things. Some maintain, that there are ſeven *Sacraments* by divine Inſtitution; while others affirm, that there are but two; and yet in the mean Time, they know not what a *Sacrament* is, and could never agree about the Meaning of the Word. One would think that Marriage, or the religious Obligation and Tie of one Man to one Woman during Life, ſhould, upon the Chriſtian Inſtitution, be the moſt *ſacred Oath*, or *Sacrament* in the World; but yet our Proteſtant Clergy, will, I preſume, in general, be of another Mind. In ſhort, this clerical Religion is a new Thimble and Button, or a Powder-le-Pimp, which may be this or that, every Thing or nothing, juſt as the Jugglers pleaſe. And yet all this, in their different Ways, if you can believe them, is divine Inſtitution, and immediate Revelation from God. All which can amount to no more than this, that the ſeveral Paſſions and Intereſts of every Party, and of every Man, are divinely inſtituted by immediate Revelation; and this is the Privilege of an *orthodox Faith*, and of being religious in the *clerical Way*.

Theoph. I find you are reſolv'd not to credit yourſelf to the Clergy, and that you look upon them as very bad Pay-Maſters; but then I wiſh you would tell me wherein your Chriſtianity lies, or upon what Principles you pretend to be a Chriſtian. In ſhort, *Philalethes*, what think you of Chriſt, or what is Chriſtianity?

Philal. I take Chriſtianity to be that moſt complete and perfect Scheme of moral Truth and

and Righteouſneſs, which was firſt preach'd to the World by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and from them convey'd down to us under its own Evidence of immutable Rectitude, Wiſdom and Reaſon. This Definition, as I imagine, takes in all that is eſſential to Chriſtianity, or that can be receiv'd and allow'd as a conſtituent Part of it.

Theoph. But what, I beſeech you, would you make of the Evidence of Miracles, as a Proof of divine Revelation; does that ſignify nothing at all?

Philal. I am willing to allow as much as you can make of it, which perhaps might be juſt nothing; and therefore to oblige you I ſhall allow a little more.

Theoph. You are extremely obliging indeed, your Generoſity, in this Caſe, is no Matter of Doubt to me; and as I expect nothing at all, the ſmalleſt Thing in the World will be taken as a Boon, and therefore pray be as liberal as you can.

Philal. You need not, *Theophanes*, beg any Thing of me that is in my Power to grant; but I preſume you would not put me to ſo hard a Trial of Friendſhip, as to extort Conceſſions againſt Truth and Reaſon.

Theoph. No, *Philalethes*; this I am ſure would be to no Purpoſe: I cannot pretend to bribe you, and if my Friendſhip was of Value enough, I ſhould ſcorn to proſtitute it upon any ſuch Occaſion. But in the mean Time, I ſhall be glad to know, without Com-

pliment or Ceremony, what you can grant me in this Point as a Matter of Reaſon and Juſtice, and without Favour or Affection.

Philal. That there can be no Connexion between the Power of working Miracles, and the Truth of Doctrines taught by the Miracle-Workers, is, I think very plain, and I take this as a Conceſſion from you, ſince you objected nothing to what I obſerv'd before, that falſe Prophets, the moſt wicked Seducers, and even the Devil himſelf may work Miracles. And therefore Miracles alone conſider'd can prove nothing at all, and ought to have no Weight or Influence with any Body. But yet it will not follow, nor do I intend to prove from hence, that Miracles are of no Uſe, or can ſerve to no Purpoſe at all in Religion. Miracles naturally tend to awaken and alarm Men, to take them off from a ſupine Negligence and Incogitancy, and to bring them to a ſober and ſedate Conſideration of the Matters thus propoſed to them: Eſpecially if the Miracles are wrought for the Good of Mankind, and with a viſible Regard to their Intereſt and Happineſs. This muſt convince Men, that the Perſons thus qualify'd, and thus employing their extraordinary Powers, can have no Deſign againſt them, but muſt upon the Whole intend their real Intereſt and Welfare. And this Effect the Miracles of Chriſt and the Apoſtles plainly had upon the People, to convince them that they were no Enemies to God, or their Country; and

and consequently, to dispose them to consider coolly and soberly, the Nature and Tendency of the Doctrines they had to propose to them, and not to take up implicitly with what the Priests and Rulers thought or said of it. The Miracles so visibly promoting the common Good, made the People in general thoughtful and attentive; and consequently, disposed them to receive the Truth upon its proper Evidence, or rational Proof; which was all that they were intended for. Miracles, therefore, are perhaps the most effectual Means of removing Prejudices and procuring Attention to what is deliver'd; but can never be taken for the proper Evidence or Proof of the Doctrines themselves, without quitting the only certain Mark or Criterion of divine Truth, and exposing ourselves to all the Enthusiasm and Imposture in the World. And the Reason is, as observ'd before, that the supernatural Power of working Miracles has no Manner of Connexion with moral Truth and Righteousness; and yet moral Truth and Righteousness, when it comes to be proposed to, and consider'd by the Mind, is the only sure Proof or Evidence of any Doctrine, as coming from God, and to be receiv'd as a Matter of divine Authority. It is not here a sufficient Ground of believing any Doctrine, as from God, to say, that 'tis indifferent, or at least not contrary to moral Truth and Righteousness, as appearing to the Understanding; no more than it would be in re-

ceiving any Coin or Money, as circulated by the King's Authority, without his authoriz'd Stamp, to ſay, that tho' the King's Stamp was not upon it, it was however a fair Blank, or at leaſt no falſe Stamp. But notwithſtanding this Plea in receiving, or putting off ſuch Money, I might be reaſonably deem'd and proſecuted as an Enemy to the King and Country. This, *Theophanes*, I take to be exactly the Caſe; the Generality of the Clergy of all Denominations, from the very Beginning, have been continually palming upon us falſe *Coin* under the Authority of God, and when they are convicted of it, they cry out, that this is but now and then, in a few particular Inſtances, and only here and there a *Piece*; and they think it hard, very hard, that they cannot have Credit upon ſuch ſmall Matters. What, muſt nothing ſell at theſe religious Markets, but moral Truth and Reaſon? God forbid! Men of *Iſrael* help! Help, O King and ye Nobles and Senators of the Land; Help, O ye Reverend and Right Reverend Prieſts and Prelates, who are engaged in the ſame ſacred Obligations and Ties of Intereſt with ourſelves: Theſe are the Men that would turn the World upſide down, and confine the Intereſts of the Hierarchy to moral Truth and Righteouſneſs. But if ever this ſhould happen, nothing but the Judgments of God can be expected from Heaven, as certainly as the Truth, Infallibility, and divine Authority of our *political Religion.*

Theoph. But I hope you would not rank the whole Clergy of every Denomination under this Claſs; I know many of the Clergy of ſeveral Denominations, and ſo I believe muſt you, who make nothing neceſſary in Point of Religion. but what is morally true, right and reaſonable. But you ſeem to have a riveted Spite againſt the whole Order, and can never ſpeak or write of them without a viſible Emotion, and dipping your Pen in Gall.

Philal. You miſtake me, *Theophanes*, I have no ſuch Aim as you imagine; I know very well, that many Eccleſiaſticks of the ſeveral different Denominations are wiſe and reaſonable Men, and lay no Streſs upon any Thing in Religion, but on moral Truth and Righteouſneſs. But then, pray, how few are theſe, and what is their Fate? Are they not generally look'd upon and treated as common Enemies and as the Reproach and Diſgrace of the holy Order, who would prefer Truth to Intereſt, and Righteouſneſs to the Power of a Party? Are they not left to ſtarve upon lean Curacies, or juſt to keep Life and Soul together, in remote Villages and Country Pariſhes, upon the charitable Contributions of the honeſt Poor? And in the mean while, how are our political State Divines every where careſs'd and flatter'd, and how happy is it for them that they have an Intereſt much ſuperior to Truth and Reaſon, Religion or Conſcience? And the Ground of

all this is certainly a clerical Religion above Reaſon, and above all Poſſibility of Proof: Yet after all, *Theophanes*, I can aſſure you, that I have not the leaſt Deſign to aboliſh, or ſet aſide the Eccleſiaſtical Order, but only to reform it, and keep theſe Guardians of our Souls within due Bounds. Would to God, that all the King's Servants were Prophets, and all our Miniſters, Preachers of Righteouſneſs; then ſhould we gladly pay Tithes and Contributions, and rejoice in the Salvation of the Lord. But I would fain diſarm this ſpiritual Militia of thoſe carnal Weapons, which they have always fought againſt us with, and in which Warfare the Devil, by divine Permiſſion, has given them too much Succeſs. Chriſtianity and reveal'd Religion is the common Cry; but when they come to define or explain this, 'tis evident that they mean nothing by it, but certain Doctrines which are very beneficial to themſelves, and which at the ſame Time have really no Foundation in the *New Teſtament*.

Theoph. I am glad, *Philalethes*, to hear you mention the *New Teſtament*, and Doctrines which are there founded, I doubted whether you would ſtand by any ſuch Teſt; but if you will, I am perſuaded, that all the wiſe and honeſt Part of the Clergy will join Iſſue with you, and be ready to give up any Opinions, or Doctrines, which you can prove not to be there grounded. You muſt, as I preſume, allow them the two Sacraments, and

the

the Death of Chriſt, as a Propitiation or vicarious Sacrifice for the Sins of the World, which ſeem to be plainly founded in the *New Teſtament*, and are ſurely Matters of Revelation, and not properly Matters of Reaſon, though they may appear very reaſonable when they are once revealed and propoſed to the Underſtanding.

Philal. I allow that there is nothing in theſe Doctrines as contain'd and taught in the *New Teſtament*, but what may be admitted as reaſonable, when they are once rightly underſtood; but then, when they come to be thus underſtood, they will no longer ſerve the Purpoſes of the Hierarchy.

Theoph. I ſhall never contend for any Mens Intereſt longer than Truth will ſerve their Purpoſe. But why the Sacraments, and Death of Chriſt, as a Sacrifice for Sin, will not ſerve the Purpoſe of the Clergy, when rightly underſtood, as well as they can ſerve their Purpoſe now, you will pleaſe to inform me, remembring ſtill, that I do not here mean the *Popiſh*, but our reformed, Proteſtant Clergy. For it does not yet occur to me what Doctrines they teach about the Sacraments, and Death of Chriſt, that can be of any Uſe or Advantage to them more than to others.

Philal. I wonder you ſhould not ſee what peculiar Advantages even the Proteſtant Clergy have made, and what Intereſt and Influence they have gain'd by their Doctrine about the Sacraments, as neceſſary Means of Grace, of

which they are the ſole Proprietors and Diſpenſers. For if the Sacraments are neceſſary Means of Grace, and none but the Clergy can diſpenſe them, the Clergy muſt be as neceſſary as the Sacraments themſelves. But if it ſhould appear, that according to the *New Teſtament*, the Clergy have no peculiar Part or Lot in this Matter, and that the Sacraments are as valid and uſeful in the Hands of the Laity, as in their Hands; it is poſſible that the Clergy might loſe ſome Weight or Influence by it, ſhould this ever come to be the common Opinion; eſpecially if it ſhould be made appear farther, that theſe Sacraments were only temporary or occaſional Things, and never intended as ſtanding, immutable Laws of Chriſtianity; and both theſe I ſhall endeavour to prove, whatever the preſent Clergy of any Denomination may happen to think of it, or loſe by it.

It muſt be here obſerv'd then, that both the Sacraments, as we now call them, were civil Uſages, or national Cuſtoms among the *Jews* in our Saviour's Time, and all along for many Ages before. So that Chriſt did not herein inſtitute any new Ritual or Ceremony, but thought fit to apply two of their ancient, national Cuſtoms to a religious Uſe, which might be more agreeable to the Nature and Conſtitution of his new Religion; and as it is plain, that our Saviour made no Change or Alteration in theſe national Cuſtoms or Uſages, but took them as they were, it is impoſſible to underſtand them

them right, without conſidering what the national Uſage of the *Jews* then was. And here, it is certain, with reſpect to Baptiſm, that the *Jews* baptiz'd every Proſelyte, with his whole Houſe or Family, Children and all. They thus baptiz'd the Proſelytes of the Gate, but the Proſelytes of Righteouſneſs they baptized and circumciſed too. But then, it muſt be conſidered, that tho' they baptized their Proſelytes with their Houſholds, Families, Servants and Children, yet they never baptized the Iſſue or Poſterity of ſuch, while they were born under the ſame Diſpenſation, and continued in the ſame Faith and Profeſſion. Now in this Sort of Baptiſm, the Prieſts or Clergy had nothing at all to do with the Matter, no more than with Circumciſion; and every Body knows, that it was no Part of their Office, but it was always done by the Maſter or Head of the Family, or by any one elſe under his Authority and Direction. And ſince Chriſt himſelf makes no new Orders or Regulations about this, we are to underſtand it according to the Practice and Cuſtom before in Uſe among the *Jews*; nor is it poſſible the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians could have underſtood it otherwiſe, without farther Directions. Baptiſm, therefore, as grounded upon the antient Cuſtom and Uſage of the *Jews*, from whence it was plainly taken, can only concern thoſe who are proſelyted to Chriſtianity at firſt, and not their Children or Poſterity, born under the ſame Diſpenſation, and continuing

tinuing in the ſame Profeſſion. Nor have the Clergy any Thing to do with it, as an excluſive Right, ſo far as it does extend; but ſo far as they have ever been made uſe of, or employ'd as a Matter of Conveniency, they have been apt to plead Privilege, and run it into Neceſſity. And as Baptiſm was not originally a Church Ordinance, or any ſpecial Work of the Clergy; ſo the ſame Thing will be evident of the other Sacrament or Euchariſt, upon a little Conſideration of the Nature, Original, and Deſign of it. It was a national Cuſtom, or Uſage, among the *Jews*, after Supper, which was their ſet Meal, to break Biſket round the Table, with which every one preſent had his Cup of Wine; and as this concluded the Supper, or Entertainment, it was attended with a Grace or ſhort Form of Thankſgiving to God, for theſe and all his other Favours, and praying the Continuance of them, and Aſſiſtance to make a right Uſe of them: And this was a very rational Cuſtom or Practice, as nothing can be more fit or reaſonable than to acknowledge God in all our Ways, and aſcribe all our Enjoyments and Bleſſings to his Bounty. Now, it is plain, that Chriſt here, when he had ſupp'd upon the Paſcha with his Diſciples, diſtributed the Biſket and Wine exactly according to the common Cuſtom and Uſage of the *Jews*, or after the Manner of the Country in all their other ſet Meals; which Uſage he made no Alteration in, but this, that the Bread and

Wine, after the Supper or Entertainment, with the Grace attending it, and upon which they call'd this Cup the Grace Cup, than that this, I ſay, for the future, ſhould be done in his Name, *i. e.* in the Faith and Profeſſion of his Doctrine, as they were to do every Thing elſe; and particularly, that they ſhould do it in Remembrance of him who had died a Martyr in this Cauſe, as a Seal and Confirmation of the Truth of it, and of his Love to Mankind. This was the plain Matter of Fact, and is there any Thing here of a Church Inſtitution? Any work cut out for the Clergy? Or any peculiar Action or Office reſerv'd to them? Chriſt did this as the Maſter of the Family, or Founder of the Feaſt, as others did in the like Caſe; but not as a Biſhop, Prieſt, or Clergyman. I know, that this Uſage was pretty early brought into the Churches, in their very large and populous Aſſemblies, firſt at *Corinth*, and afterwards in other Places; but this was done without any apoſtolical Advice or Authority. And when the Clergy had once got it into their Hands, they ſoon made a *Myſtery*, and afterwards a *Contradiction* of it. And we are now ſo far departed from the original Practice and Uſage in this Caſe, that it is hard to ſay what we have retain'd, in common with Chriſt and the Apoſtles. The Apoſtles made Uſe of a thin, hard and brittle Bread or Biſket, that would eaſily break, to ſignify the Body of Chriſt broken for us; but we uſe a ſoft, thick, tough

tough Bread, that will not break, and therefore they are forced to cut it: The Apoſtles uſed unleavened Bread, to ſignify Sincerity and Truth; but we uſe leavened, fermented Bread: The Apoſtles made this a religious Rite or Uſage in every Family, and at every friendly Entertainment; but the Clergy confine it to their Churches, where there is not much Friendſhip, and very ſeldom any Entertainment at all: The Apoſtles left this holy Communion in the Hands of the Brethren or Laity; but the Clergy make it a peculiar, myſterious Action of theirs, as the neceſſary Means of conveying Grace: The Apoſtles, as all the moſt primitive Chriſtians teſtify'd and practiſed after them, mix'd Water with their Wine upon this Occaſion, to ſignify and repreſent the Water and Blood that iſſued out of Chriſt's Sides when he was pierced; but our Clergy uſe nothing but Wine. In ſhort, they have left out every Thing in this Sacrament, with Regard to the external Rite or Uſage, that was truly primitive and apoſtolical, and retain'd nothing but their own Inventions, Corruptions and Alterations. But to reſume the Conſideration of the other Sacrament a little farther, I mean Baptiſm, cold Bathing, or plunging and waſhing the Body all over in cold Water, as a religious Rite; I ſay, that there is no ſuch Thing now remaining, except among the *Baptiſts*, who, upon this Account, are rightly diſtinguiſh'd by that Name, ſince our other Churches at preſent do

do not baptize at all. To recount here the Defences of our modern Clergy, and what they have ſaid for this new Inſtitution of their own, and their Method of dipping by ſprinkling only, might ſerve to entertain you; but their Reaſons and Arguments are ſo very weak, idle and ridiculous, that the bare mentioning them muſt expoſe and turn them into a Jeſt. How ſprinkling, or pouring Water upon the Face, can ſignify or repreſent the Death, Burial, and Reſurrection of the Perſon, is a little hard to conceive. I muſt own, that this ſprinkling or pouring may very aptly ſignify and repreſent the Sprinkling the Conſcience with the Blood of Chriſt, or the Effuſion of the Spirit upon the Soul: But then, it unluckily happens here, that this was not intended to be ſignify'd or repreſented by Baptiſm, in the Scripture Account of it; nor is it in the leaſt agreeable to the Cuſtom and Uſage of the *Jews*, from whence it was borrowed. The *Jews* and People of *Iſrael* were very famous and remarkable for the Itch, Scab, Leproſy, and all other cutaneous Foulneſſes; for which they had never found any Thing ſo beneficial and effectual as *cold Bathing*, which might, perhaps, be the Reaſon why their great Lawgiver interwove this Practice with the very Genius and Conſtitution of their Religion; ſince, according to the Conſtitution of their Law, there could hardly a Day paſs in which they muſt not be obliged to uſe cold Bathing ſeveral Times; and indeed, if a freſh and clear Skin,

Skin, a good Complexion, a Freedom from cutaneous Diſeaſes, a Syſtem of well-braced Nerves, and all that Strength, Activity and Vigour which the Body can communicate to the Mind; if, I ſay, theſe Things are of any Value or Conſideration, I think cold Bathing deſerves to be enjoin'd under the ſtrongeſt religious Sanctions.

But to return, if there be any Religion in poſitive Laws, and external Rituals or Ceremonies, it muſt certainly conſiſt in keeping cloſe to the original Inſtitution itſelf, without the Liberty of varying from it in any the leaſt Circumſtance of Action. The People of *Iſrael* thought ſo when they built the Tabernacle firſt, and afterwards the Temple, exactly according to the Commands and Directions given from God to *Moſes* and *Solomon*, from which if they had ſwerv'd in the leaſt Tittle or Article, the Whole could have been good for nothing; but muſt have been Rebellion inſtead of Obedience. It is wonderful to obſerve, how our modern Judaizers behave themſelves upon this; they are zealous Sticklers for poſitive Laws, without which they would not give one Farthing for Religion; but then they have a Power to repeal or alter the poſitive Laws of God, and to make ſuch new ones of their own, as they ſhall think convenient. Without Ceremony, Religion is a Shadow, and if you will not grant them this, they muſt give up the *Evidence* of what ſome of them cannot yet ſee, and the *Subſtance* of Things hoped for.

But

But though our Brethren the *Baptiſts*, as they are called, come neareſt of any among us now to this original, religious Uſage of *Baptiſm*; yet, I think, they are much miſtaken in imagining as they do, that Baptiſm was ever intended as any Sign or Means of *perſonal Sactification*. Baptiſm, among the *Jews* and *primitive Chriſtians*, who took it from them, was always look'd upon as a ſocial and national Ritual, or, as our Divines affect to call it, an initiating Ordinance. By this Proſelytes were made, and Men were received and recognized as Members of ſuch or ſuch a religious State, or conſtituted Society. When Perſons had entered themſelves and their Families into this new State, or publick Oeconomy of Religion, they, and their Iſſue or Poſterity, in Caſe of no perſonal Apoſtaſy from it afterward, were intitled to all the Benefits and Privileges of the Kingdom of God, under ſuch a Conſtitution, and all conſider'd as holy in this national Senſe, without a farther Continuation of Baptiſm; and this upon the Maxim which they all ſuppoſed and went upon in this Sort of Purification, *that if the Root be holy, the Branch is alſo holy*. And thus, as the *Jews* never baptiz'd the Children, Iſſue, or Poſterity of their original Proſelytes, while they were born under the ſame Oeconomy, and continued in the ſame Profeſſion; ſo neither did the primitive Chriſtians, for the firſt two hundred Years; and whenever the Chriſtian Church departed from this original *Jewiſh*, and afterwards Apoſtolical

ſtolical Practice, Rule and Meaſure, they certainly departed from the only true original Ground and Reaſon of the whole Matter. This Practice, upon the above-mentioned Principle, continued in the Church, till they came to fall into an odd Sort of a Notion, by miſtaking a Paſſage in *John*'s Goſpel, that without the actual Application of both the Sacraments, there could be no Communication of Grace, or any Poſſibility of Salvation. And then they began to baptize Infants, and give them the other Sacrament too, much about the ſame Time, and upon the ſame Principle. And they even cramm'd the ſacramental Bread down the Throats of ſome weak Infants who were not able to ſwallow it, upon this moſt godly and charitable Reſolution, which they came to in one of their earlieſt Councils, that none ſhould periſh for want of the Grace of God; and no Doubt that ſuch wiſe Reaſoners muſt naturally conclude, that it would be better to choak ſuch poor, innocent, helpleſs Creatures, than to damn them. This was the clerical Religion then, and it has never been much better ſince. Thus much I have thought fit to ſay of the two Sacraments, as to their original Foundation and Uſe, and the preſent Notion and Application of them. And now, *Theophanes*, I ſhall be glad to hear what Obſervations you have been making upon it, and how far you think me to be in the Right or the Wrong.

Theoph.

Theoph. I muſt own, that I have not much conſidered this Matter, and muſt therefore take farther Time, and ſome other Opportunity, to give you my Thoughts about it. But, I believe, the Clergy in general will bear your Argument very grievouſly, not only for the Appearances of Truth and Probability in it, but more eſpecially for the Sting. Methinks, it is pity you could not ſay the ſame Things in a ſofter Way.

Philal. But then you own that it would not have the ſame Effect; and I can aſſure you, that I take the Lethargy to be ſo very deep, and the Caſe ſo extreamly dangerous, that, I think, the ſharpeſt and rougheſt Method to be no more than neceſſary to a Cure; and if you ſhould imagine the Method a little too ſevere, you muſt not blame me, while the Truth is ſo evident, and ſo neceſſary to be known.

Theoph. I believe you will have no Reaſon to boaſt of your Cure in this Caſe. And having bethought myſelf a little, I can aſſure you, that you have not yet cured me. As for *Baptiſm*, I have not much to ſay, for I can no more approve of *Infant Baptiſm* than you, nor of the preſent Mode of Baptiſm as now generally practiſed: But then, as to the other Sacrament, I doubt whether you would gain any Thing to the Side of true Religion, if you could throw it out of our Churches.

Philal. But, do you think it might not be ſomething gain'd to the Side of true Religion, if one could throw this Sacrament out of the Churches in *Spain*, *Portugal*, *France*, *Italy*, and all the Popiſh Countries?

Theoph. Perhaps it may be ſo; but then we have no ſuch Abuſe of it in our Churches. Our Clergy do not pretend to make our Gods, or to convey the Grace of God to us by any independent Action of their own.

Philal. It may, or may not be ſo; the Caſe is doubtful, I own, and much may be ſaid on both Sides. But, admitting this, pray, why is not the religious Commemoration of Chriſt's Death, and of the Bleſſings and Benefits we receive from him, as effectual after Dinner as after Supper, or in a private Family as in a Church?

Theoph. Were this allow'd, I doubt, our private Families would be no Churches, and we ſhould have no Churches made up of private Families.

Philal. Perhaps, you are miſtaken in this, at leaſt a Reaſon for it is very neceſſary. Do you think, that *publick Worſhip* is only owing to a poſitive, ritual, or clerical Religion? If you imagine this, I am ſo far of another Mind, that, I think, this poſitive, ritual, clerical, or ſacerdotal Religion, has been infinitely prejudicial to publick Worſhip, and has made the moſt judicious and thinking Part of Mankind very indifferent whether

whether they attend any ſuch Worſhip or no. Can you imagine that any Man of Senſe in *England* would ever go to Church, to hear theſe poſitive Rituals and Ceremonials preach'd to him, if he had not ſome other Motives and Inducements, which perhaps the Clergy are not aware of?

Theoph. But what other Motive or Inducement can any good or honeſt Man have in going to Church, but his Belief of the Doctrines there taught, and an Expectation of growing wiſer and better by them?

Philal. Do you think this the only Aim and Deſign of Men in going to Church, or is this the Notion you have of publick Church Aſſemblies?

Theoph. I think this is what they ought to propoſe and aim at, or otherwiſe they might as well and better ſtay at home.

Philal. But ſuppoſe their ſtaying at home ſhould give them the Reputation of Atheiſts and Infidels, though otherwiſe they might improve their Time better at home, than at Church? Would you not rather go to Church, or even take the Sacrament in Turn, to be deem'd a good Chriſtian, than ſtay at home for the Imputation of Atheiſm and Infidelity?

Theoph. You have then no other Reaſon for going to Church, or attending publick Worſhip, but to ſave your Reputation; and yet as ſoon as this Reaſon is known, your Reputation is loſt.

Philal. The Clergy always underſtand theſe Things right enough. They will never queſtion your Want of Faith, if you will but hear and pay them well; or if you pay well, it is a Matter of no Conſequence to them, whether you hear them or not. Faith, indeed, cometh by hearing, but Money may be given without hearing or ſeeing either. Theſe Gentlemen, *Theophanes*, are always ready to make proper Allowances, and will never make you an Atheiſt, or an Infidel, without good Reaſon for it. A little Money ſhall authorize you to ſleep all the Time of Sermon, to which you had a natural Right before. But you ought not to take ſuch a Liberty without an Indulgence, in which Caſe your Money is better than your Faith. You never ought to think or ſpeak freely without a Licence, and 'tis the Church only that can authorize you to think or ſpeak at all. But in the mean while, 'tis very much to be wiſh'd, that we could attend our Pulpit Diſcourſes, as reaſonable Creatures, and without affronting our Underſtandings. For, I think, it is a very hard Taſk which they put upon us, to quit either Revelation or Reaſon, and that we muſt have no Religion, or no Senſe.

Theoph. But, pray, tell me what is this clerical or ſacerdotal Religion, as you affect to call it?

Philal.

Philal. Sir, The clerical or ſacerdotal Chriſtianity or reveal'd Religion, conſiſts in the Belief of Doctrines which cannot be underſtood, and which conſequently cannot be taught; and in the Uſe of Means which have no natural or rational Connexion with, or Tendency to the End propoſed. Or, if you pleaſe, it is the myſtical Way of Salvation.

Theoph. It is pity, *Philalethes*, methinks, that you were not a Preacher yourſelf, or that you would not give us a Sample, at leaſt, how the Clergy ought to preach, and what Doctrines they are to inſtruct us in, as from Chriſt and the Apoſtles.

Philal. Perhaps, having been ſo long uſed to ſyſtematical Divinity, you could not bear a Chriſtian Sermon.

Theoph. Yes, Sir, you know very well that I can bear Anti-Chriſtianity from you, and I ſhould willingly attend to you for an Hour or two, or as long as you pleaſe, provided that you would but preach, and at the ſame Time take ſome unexceptionably orthodox Text to explain and diſcourſe upon it in your own Way.

Philal. Perhaps a Lay-Sermon might not be altogether unedifying; but were you to urge me to it, you might poſſibly repent it, if the Preacher ſhould happen to be too long-winded.

Theoph. I have armed myſelf againſt ſuch a Threat, only with one Exception more, which is this, that you ſhall not tie me down too ſtrictly to Church-Orders; but give me Leave to take Snuff, walk about, and take a Glaſs of Wine now and then, or hand it to you, and even to break off the Thread of your Diſcourſe for a Minute or two, if I ſhould have an Occaſion of going out.

Philal. Since you have provok'd me thus far, I ſhall take you upon all your Terms, and ſhall even indulge you farther to interrupt me, if you pleaſe, by throwing an Objection now and then in my Way, if you ſhould find Occaſion. But, I believe, at preſent you want ſomething elſe more than a Sermon. The Bell, I hear, rings to Dinner, and leſt we ſhould be too deeply engaged, here comes a Servant to call us in. We will dine and refreſh ourſelves a little, and then in the Afternoon I ſhall beg your Chriſtian Patience for a few Hours in this Place.

Theoph. Well, *Philalethes*, having now made a good Dinner, and being returned to this fine Summer Apartment, ſo well contrived for Speculation and Solitude, I muſt demand your Promiſe, that you will give me a Sermon upon ſome unexceptionably orthodox Text, under the Condition as already ſtipulated. And as I am prepared with Patience, I expect that you ſhould talk Senſe.

Philal. I could ſubmit to all your Conditions, but the laſt, which is a new one, and therefore I muſt demand your Patience, whether I ſhould talk Senſe or not. I would comply, *Theophanes*, with any Thing reaſonable; but to oblige a Man in preaching to talk Senſe, would be moſt unreaſonable Nonſenſe. However, with Submiſſion to your better Senſe, I ſhall crave your Attention to that Expreſſion of St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, Chap. i. ver. 7. where ſpeaking of Chriſt, he ſaith; *In whom we have Redemption through his Blood, the Forgiveneſs of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace.*

It will be impoſſible to underſtand St. *Paul* here, or elſewhere, without conſidering the Circumſtances he was under, and the different Tempers, Principles and Intereſts of the Perſons he had to deal with. This Apoſtle, as is well known, had been born and bred a *Jew*, and brought up under *Gamaliel*, a famous Profeſſor in the School of *Hillel*. In Conſequence of which Education, he was at firſt a great Zealot for the Law of *Moſes*, and a bitter Enemy to the Chriſtians. He dreaded much the Conſequences of this new Religion, and made it his Buſineſs to execute the penal Laws upon as many of its Profeſſors, as he could apprehend and bring to Juſtice. But all this was from Ignorance, and a miſtaken Zeal, as he afterwards confeſſes. He was ſtill a Per-

ſon of great natural Honour and Integrity, and his Proſecution of the Chriſtians was carried on, as he thought, for the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind. He was very warm for Truth, and a great Promoter of it in a *legal Way*, which he look'd upon, as the moſt effectual Means of *ſuppreſſing Error*. This was the true Spirit of *Judaiſm*, and the Perfection of Righteouſneſs according to the Law. St. *Paul* was of the *eſtabliſh'd Church*, and found himſelf obliged to ſtand by it in *Intereſt*, which he thought to be *Conſcience*. But this great Apoſtle was convinced by a Miracle. For this, I think, is plain, that nothing leſs than Miracle could have convinced this great Rabbin, that he had miſtaken the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind. But this Apoſtle being once convinced of his Error, he became a remarkable Defender of Toleration, the Right of private Judgment, and Liberty of Conſcience, againſt all the Force and Terrors of the Law; tho' this Law had the beſt Plea in the World of any human Law, for being the Law of God. But St. *Paul* being once convinced to the contrary, had the Courage and Honeſty, openly and in the Face of the World, to condemn this Law, as a mere temporary, worldly and carnal Inſtitution, that never could give Life, or procure Acceptance with God; and that muſt prove the eternal Ruin and De-

Deſtruction of all thoſe who had any ſuch Expectations from it. And while he left the *Jews* to be governed by it in their civil and national Capacity, as he himſelf always comply'd with it, he exempted all others from it, as not having the leaſt Concern in it, and could not be at all obliged by it. He declared, that true Religion was quite another Thing, and that the Law, of which they were ſo infinitely fond, was ſo uncapable of giving Life, that they who expected Happineſs and Immortality, from ſuch an Obedience, muſt periſh for ever. Upon this Account, the Apoſtle being rejected and abandoned by his Countrymen, as a dangerous Innovator, a *peſtilent Fellow*, and a *Mover of Sedition*, he turned to the *Gentiles*, and made the Overtures of eternal Life and Salvation to them, as obtainable by Jeſus Chriſt and his Goſpel, without the leaſt Dependence on the *Jews*, or Subjection to the Law of *Moſes*. But, notwithſtanding this, he did not quite give up his own Nation. He ſtill retain'd Bowels of Compaſſion towards them, and laboured, with all his Might, to gain over as many of them as he could to the Intereſt of true Religion. And for this he was the beſt qualify'd of any Man, as having been thoroughly inſtructed in the Law, and being perfectly well acquainted with all their popular prevailing Opinions, and traditional

Doctrines, of which he never fail'd, upon all proper Occasions, to make his best Advantage. Under these Circumstances he could have no great Hopes from the *Jews*; but yet he became *all Things to all Men, that he might gain some* of his own Nation. In his Argumentations and Reasonings with the *Jews*, he made all proper Allowances for their national Prejudices, and chose to express himself in a Manner that might give them the least possible Offence. And, from hence, he was often obliged to make use of Words borrowed from the Law, and apply them to his own Purpose, tho' in a figurative and allegorical Sense, and not in their strict, original Sense and Construction, in which they had been always used and applied as *Jewish Law Terms*. Any due Attention, in reading St. *Paul*'s Epistles, must discover this; and yet, the Want of observing it, has occasioned great Difficulties and Perplexities in the Christian Scheme; and many learned Systems have been contriv'd and drawn up upon it, which consist only of a most unnatural and inconsistent Jumble and Mixture of Christianity and Judaism together. This is what I shall have too much Occasion to exemplify, in pursuing the present Subject; but yet, I hope, you will have Patience enough to hear me out, while I shall endeavour to lay before you the true State of the Case.

St.

St. *Paul*, in this Epiſtle to the Church of *Epheſus*, makes it his Buſineſs to extol and magnify the rich and free Grace of God, as now manifeſted to the whole World, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, under the Goſpel Diſpenſation, and to raiſe in them the higheſt Senſe of Gratitude, and Love to God upon this Account; even to that God, who being the common Father of Mankind, the ſupreme Governor of the World, and the original Source or Fountain of all Goodneſs, had now by Jeſus Chriſt in the Goſpel made known his Will to all Men in general, without any Reſpect of Perſons, or any particular Regard to one Nation above another; as being deſirous, that all Men, whether *Jew* or *Gentile*, who were equally his Creatures and Subjects, ſhould equally obtain his Favour, and ſtand upon the ſame Terms for Salvation and eternal Life; which eternal Life and Happineſs, as Man's ultimate End, with the neceſſary Means of obtaining it, are now reveal'd in the Goſpel by *Jeſus Chriſt*, in *whom we have Redemption thro' his Blood, even the Forgiveneſs of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace.* In or by *whom*, i. e. by *Jeſus Chriſt*, in Conſequence of his perfect Obedience unto Death, we are *redeem'd*, or *deliver'd* from the Dominion and Condemnation of Sin, by the rich Favour and ſuperabounding Love of God, as manifeſted to Mankind by his Son Chriſt in the Goſpel: *Which Goſpel*,

pel, or *Grace of God* thus manifeſted to all Men, for their common Benefit, both teacheth and enableth us to *deny all Ungodlineſs and wordly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godlily in the World.* This being, as I apprehend, the true Senſe and import of the Words, I ſhall proceed, without any farther Expoſition or Paraphraſe, to diſcourſe upon them in the following Method.

1ſt, I ſhall ſtate and conſider the Doctrine and Method of Atonement, or Propitiation by Blood.

2dly, I will conſider the Chriſtian Doctrine of Redemption, or Deliverance from the Power of Sin and Satan, by the Death of Chriſt.

And then, 3dly, or laſtly, I will draw ſome practical Inference, and make ſuch an Improvement of the Whole, as may be moſt conducive to the Purpoſes of Virtue and true Religion.

1ſt then, I am to ſtate and conſider the *Jewiſh* Law, Principle of Atonement, and Propitiation by Blood. In order to which, it will be proper to take a ſhort View of the Law itſelf, and conſider its real, original Conſtitution with regard to thoſe Sacrifices. And here, I ſhall briefly conſider, in what Caſes theſe Sacrifices were admitted, wherein their chief Virtue or Efficacy was ſuppoſed to lie, and by what Motives the People were excited and encouraged to comply with ſuch an Inſtitution. With regard to the Nature and Quality of theſe Sacrifices, the beſt and choiceſt of every Kind

was

was ſtrictly enjoined and inſiſted on by the Law. If of the Animal Tribe, they muſt be out of the clean Beaſts, or ſuch as had been allow'd and eſtabliſh'd in common Uſe as the beſt and moſt wholeſome Food, and ſuch as were moſt valued for the Richneſs and Delicacy of their Fleſh. And among theſe, it muſt be of the very choiceſt of the Kind, ſuch as had been beſt fed, and moſt highly fattened; and no Creature could be admitted in Sacrifice that had any the leaſt Defect or Blemiſh about it, whether natural or accidental; or if the Offering ſhould be of Corn, Oil, or Fruit, it muſt be of the very firſt and beſt, the prime Produce of the Earth, at a Time when theſe Things were ſcarceſt and deareſt. For it was but fit and reaſonable, that the Prieſts of the Lord, who made Atonement for the Sins of the People, ſhould be richly accommodated, and ſupplied at all Times and Seaſons with the beſt and choiceſt Proviſions; and this was very particularly, and in the moſt ſpecial Manner, taken Care of by the Law. I have juſt obſerv'd this, by the by, becauſe you would very naturally expect ſome great Advantage from hence, and that the Prieſts were not to be thus maintained and accommodated for nothing. And yet, I think, it is certain, that there could be no Commutation or Exchange of any Puniſhment under this Law, as a Favour or Matter of Grace from any of theſe

theſe Sacrifices. The Penalty, whatever it was, ſuppoſing the Offence prov'd, muſt be executed as the Law had enjoined, and there could be no ſuch Thing as any Pardon, Forgiveneſs, prerogative Power, or Act of Grace under this Conſtitution. In all capital Caſes, the Offender, upon legal Proof or Conviction, muſt *die the Death*, and no Sacrifice could exempt him. And in all lower Caſes, where the Law had not provided *Death*, but ſome pecuniary Mulct, or perſonal Labour and Servitude upon Non-Payment, this Penalty was to be ſtrictly executed, and none could plead any Privilege or Exemption by Sacrifice. Indeed, in innumerable Caſes of Accident or Inadvertency, which was made penal by Law, the Sacrifice, as a Deodand or Fine to the Church, was the whole Penalty; and this was the moſt common Caſe in which Sacrifices were admitted, or where a Sacrifice was ordered with a pecuniary Mulct, one Part of the Fine was due to the State, and the other to the Church. But this, I may venture to ſay univerſally, that no other Penalty of what Nature or Kind ſoever, was ever taken off, or mitigated, on the Account of Sacrifice; and that the Sacrifices themſelves, under this Conſtitution, were the moſt grievous Yoke and intolerable Burden that ever any Law enjoin'd. Now this being the plain and undeniable Matter of Fact, as Things ſtood under the Law of *Moſes*,

Moſes, it is wonderful how our ſyſtematical Clergy ſhould ever come to ground the Notion of a *vicarious* Sacrifice upon this *Law*, or to imagine, as they do, that ever the Life of a Beaſt under the Law, was taken and accepted of inſtead of the Life of the Offender. But, if they can give me any ſuch Inſtance, I will become bound to them under any Penalty in the World, never to ſpeak a Word more. That young Students and Pupils in the Schools ſhould take up with the Opinions of their Maſters, without farther Enquiry, is a Thing too common to be wondered at; but that ſo great a Man as *Grotius* himſelf ſhould fall into this groſs Error, and that ſo many learned Men, after the painful Studies of their whole Lives, ſhould follow him herein, is the moſt ſurprizing Thing of all, and may ſerve to ſhow how much one Man thinks after another, or rather, how very few Men think at all. Now this being ſo, wherein was the great Virtue or Efficacy of theſe Sacrifices ſuppoſed to conſiſt under this moſt aſtoniſhing Inſtitution? Why, in one Word, it conſiſted ſolely and abſolutely in the *Action of the Prieſt*, in ſprinkling the *ſacrificial Blood*, which was call'd *making the Atonement*; than which, I think, there could not have been a groſſer Fallacy, or a greater Impoſition upon the common Senſe or Underſtandings of Men, and which at once lets one into

into the whole Myſtery of this Piece of Prieſt-craft. For 'tis plain, that the Perſons intitled to this Atonement, were ſuppoſed to be guilty of no Fault, after they had ſatisfied the Law in making their Offering or paying their Fine; which if they had not done, no Atonement could have been accepted. And I would fain know, what Atonement or Propitiation could ſignify under a Law that admitted of no Pardon. This, therefore, was taking out a Pardon after the Debt had been paid, and the Law ſatisfy'd, and owning an infinite Obligation to the Prieſts, for cheating them out of their Money and Subſtance.

But 'tis now Time to enquire, What Benefit or Advantage was here propoſed or conceived of, as accruing to the People, in order to keep them eaſy, and reconcile them to ſuch a Diſpenſation? Scarcely any Men at all, and much leſs ſuch a People as this, ſo cloſely wedded to their ſecular Intereſts, and ſo infinitely fond of Wealth and Dominion, would have parted with ſuch vaſt Revenues to a few Prieſts and *Levites* for nothing. The Tribe of *Levi* did not make a ſixtieth Part of the whole Body; and yet it would be eaſy to prove, that the Church Revenues under this Government, amounted to full twenty Shillings a Pound upon all the Lands of *Iſrael*. But how came they to be reconciled to this? To which one might anſwer, in ſhort, that they were never reconciled

ciled to it at all. Their national, eſtabliſh'd Worſhip was ſo prodigiouſly expenſive, and their *Clergy*, or Prieſts and *Levites*, ſuch abſolute Maſters of their Property, that they took all Occaſions to revolt, and were glad to ſerve any other Gods, that would accept them upon eaſier Terms. For beſides all thoſe Sacrifices and Oblations exacted by Law, and which became due upon ſuch an infinite Number of Accidents, and unavoidable Incidents, as made theſe *Church Dues* in legal Mulcts and Fines unſupportable; they had a Law of Reputation among them, which obliged them to very large Donations and Bounties to the Clergy, as Freewill-Offerings. The *Jewiſh* Writers ſay, that a twentieth Part of a Man's Subſtance was expected in this Way, as a Matter of Credit and Honour, where the Law had no Demand at all. Among thoſe Freewill-Offerings, human Sacrifices were look'd upon as the moſt efficacious and acceptable to the Lord. And tho' they were not exacted by Law, yet they were encouraged and indulged as the richeſt Donations, and as a Teſtimony of the moſt perfect Religion, and higheſt Degree of Love to God. Indeed, ſuch Burnt-Offerings of their Sons and Daughters to Idols, and falſe Gods, were repreſented as the greateſt poſſible Abomination: And for the ſame Reaſon, ſuch Oblations were regarded as the higheſt poſſible

Acts of Religion and Devotion, when they were intended and given up as Sacrifices of Atonement to the *true God.* Under this Law, there were two Sorts of Vows, or Dedication of Persons and Things to God and holy Uses, the *general*, and the *special.* In the *general Vow*, the Person or Thing was dedicated to the Service of God; but yet so, as not to be exempted or taken off from the *Use of Man.* And in this general Vow of Persons or Things, there was a Right of Redemption by Law; and the Dedication having been made a Matter of Record by the Priest, whatever had been so dedicated, might, at any Time, be recovered and taken back again, paying a fifth Part over and above the Valuation: This may be seen at large, and the several Laws relating hereunto, in the last Chapter of *Leviticus.* But then, there was another Case, where the Vow was *special*, and where the Persons or Things dedicated were exempted or taken off from the Use of Man. And in this Case, whatever Person or Thing had been thus specially vow'd, must be destroy'd by *Fire*, and taken off from the *Use of Man*, as a *Burnt-Offering* unto the *Lord.* And therefore, in the Chapter just now quoted, where the several Cases of general Vows had been specified and reckoned up, with their respective Prices of Redemption, there is a parti-

particular Clauſe of Exception, or a Proviſo added, with regard to theſe *ſpecial Vows*, Lev. xxviii. 28, 29. Nevertheleſs, or notwithſtanding all this, *nothing ſeparate from the common Uſe, that a Man doth ſeparate unto the Lord of all that he hath, whether it be* MAN *or* BEAST, *or Land of his Inheritance, may be ſold, nor* REDEEM'D; for every *Thing ſeparate from the common Uſe is moſt holy unto the Lord. Nothing ſeparate from the* COMMON USE, *which ſhall be ſeparate from* MAN, ſhall be *redeem'd, but ſhall* DIE THE DEATH. This, I think, is plain Law, and can need no farther Comment. But, if any one ſhould make a Difficulty where there is none, from the Law itſelf, the Caſe of *Jephtha*'s Daughter, which we have recorded in the 11th Chapter of the Book of *Judges*, muſt put the Matter beyond all Doubt, as it comes up directly to the Point, and fully exemplifies this Statute. The Caſe, in ſhort, was this: *Jephtha* being engaged in a War with the *Ammonites*, vowed a Vow unto the Lord, that if he would give him the Victory, and bring him back again in Peace and Safety, whatever *Thing*, or PERSON, ſhould firſt come out of his Houſe to meet him, at his Return, ſhould be the *Lord*'s, and that he would offer it up as a *Burnt-Offering*, Judges xi. 30, 31. The War ſucceeded, according to his Deſire, and, upon his Return, his

Daughter and only Child came out with great Affection and Joy in a publick Manner to meet him. The inſufferable Grief and Anguiſh of both Father and Daughter, upon this Occaſion, may better be conceiv'd than expreſs'd. But having given her, at her Requeſt, two Months Reſpite, he did unto her according to the Vow which he had vowed; and, I muſt add, according to the expreſs and poſitive Law, as already recited, and in this Caſe provided. But it is a moſt wretched Refuge that ſome have taken here, by ſaying, that this Lady was only vow'd to *perpetual Virginity:* A monſtrous and ridiculous Evaſion, in Defiance of the expreſs Words of the Text, and the plain Declaration of the Law, as made and provided in all ſuch Caſes of ſpecial Vows. And beſides, they forget, that there was no ſuch Thing as Vows of Celibacy and Virginity under this Law. For, tho' ſuch Sort of Vows are taken as a Matter of Religion, and peculiar Holineſs, in the Church of *Rome*, it is well known to have been a common Reproach and Abomination in *Iſrael*, and an Act of Rebellion inſtead of Obedience under the Law of *Moſes*. But a poor Evaſion may be thought better than none, tho' it is often much worſe. Beſides, that theſe *Hebrews* always look'd upon human Sacrifices, from the very Beginning, as the higheſt and moſt acceptable Acts of Devotion

votion and Religion, when freely offered to the true God, is plain in the Caſe of *Abraham*, and in God's reſerving to himſelf all the Firſt-born, as well of Man as of Beaſts, from the Time of their going out of *Egypt*. The Caſe of *Abraham* is very well known, who was commanded of God to offer up his only Son *Iſaac*, the Son and Heir of the Promiſe, as a Burnt-Offering unto the Lord. This is a plain Proof of the common Notion, or general receiv'd Opinion of that Time, that human Sacrifices might be enjoined and accepted of God as the moſt valuable and meritorious Part of Obedience; and that the Blood of Man, for the Expiation of Sin and procuring the divine Favour, was much more efficacious than the Blood of Beaſts. But, in the mean while, how came *Abraham* to know this, or what Proof could he give, that he had any ſuch Revelation or Command from God? Will any of our preſent Clergy undertake to prove, that ſuch a Command from God to *Abraham* can be now credible or probable to us? It may be probable enough, that either *Abraham* had ſuch a Belief or Conceit, or that *Moſes* miſtook the Caſe; but that God, in this, or any other Caſe, ſhould diſſolve the Law of Nature, and make it a Man's Duty, as a Thing morally reaſonable and fit, to act contrary to all the natural Principles and Paſſions of the human

Conſtitution, is abſolutely incredible, and cannot poſſibly be prov'd. And upon ſuch a Suppoſition, I defy all the Clergy in *England* to prove, that there is any ſuch Thing as a Law of Nature, or that any Thing can be juſt or unjuſt, morally fit or unfit, antecedent to a poſitive Will. For, upon this Principle, I think, it is evident, that nothing can be right or wrong, fit or unfit, in the Nature and Reaſon of Things; but that God may command the moſt unfit or unrighteous Things in the World by mere arbitrary Will and Pleaſure. A Suppoſition which muſt unhinge the whole Frame of Nature, and leave no human Creature any Rule of Action at all. It is no Wonder, therefore, that the Hierarchy, in all Ages and Countries, have been ſo infinitely fond of ſuch a Notion, and ſo greedily ſnatch'd at this Inſtance, in order to ſet aſide the Law of Nature, and ſubſtitute their own poſitive Laws in the Room of it. No Doubt, but every poſitive Law, of what Nature or Kind ſoever, muſt be juſt and right, ſuppoſing it to be a Command from God, how unreaſonable or unfit ſoever it might appear to our weak, imperfect, and limited Underſtandings: But then, the Queſtion is, how God ſhould command any ſuch Things, or what Proof could be given of it if he did? A Queſtion, which our ſyſtematical Divines,

Divines, and positive-Law Men, never cared to meddle with; tho' this is the only Thing they ought to speak to, if they would say any Thing to the Purpose. It is well known, that God, according to the Story, having slain all the First-born of *Ægypt*, in delivering his own peculiar People out of that Bondage, reserv'd, from that Time, all the First-born of the *Israelites* to himself, or all that first *opened* the Womb, whether of Man or of Beast. Now, here the Words of the Law, *all the First-born*, or whatever *first openeth the Womb*, must include both Male and Female of Man and Beast. And yet there are several Passages in the Books of *Moses*, which seem to restrain this Law to the Males only, and as not at all extending to the Females, either of Man or Beast, as *Exod.* xiii. 12, 19, 22, 29, 34. In which Places, and some others, the first-born Males are only mentioned, as reserv'd or devoted to the Lord; nor are Females any where expressly mentioned in this Case at all, otherwise than as they are included and implied in the general Words of the Law above recited. And therefore, that I may not enter into any doubtful Disputes, or be thought to make the worst of a bad Matter, I shall suppose, that the first-born Males only were here intended. That every Thing, whether animate or inanimate, under this Law, that was any ways reserv'd, dedicated, given, or

vow'd unto the *Lord*, was hereby made the Property of the *Prieſt*, is ſo far evident, as hardly to admit of a Debate; but, if any one ſhould ſtill doubt of it, the Matter is thus expreſly limited and determined in the laſt Chapter of *Leviticus*, where dedicating, giving, or vowing any Perſon or Thing to the *Lord*, and making that Perſon or Thing the Property and Poſſeſſion of the *Prieſts*, are all along uſed as equivalent Expreſſions. And as the Prieſts, to put the better Grace upon their moſt abſurd and unnatural Schemes, firſt ſubſtituted the *Name of the Lord*, for their *own Name*; ſo if you ſubſtitute *Prieſt* for *Lord*, the Text will be every where plainer, and more intelligible; for, as ſoon as this is done, the whole Myſtery is out, and you will be perpetually let into the Secret. When Perſons or Things were dedicated to the Lord, upon the general Vow, or ſo as not to be ſpecially excepted as ſeparate from the *Uſe of Man*, the original Proprietor had the Right of Redemption, provided he would pay a fifth Part more than it was worth, that is, a fifth Part over and above the Prieſt's Valuation, who would be ſure never to under-rate a Thing that might afterwards be redeem'd. But if the original Proprietor, who was likely to be the beſt Chapman, would not redeem it at this Rate, the Prieſt might ſell it to any one elſe who ſhould be the higheſt Bidder. But I muſt remember,

that

that I am not now writing a *Hiſtory*, but trying your Patience with a *Sermon*. And, therefore, I ſhall not enter into Particulars in this Caſe; but beg Leave only to obſerve to you, that this Reſervation of all the Firſt-born of *Iſrael*, by a ſpecial Law, as holy and devoted to the Lord, was a plain Declaration, and publick Recognization of God's original Right to them, as Sacrifices or Burnt-Offerings to atone and propitiate for the Sins of the People, and as a rightful Acknowledgment of that great and miraculous Deliverance out of *Ægypt*, in which God pacify'd his Anger with the Firſt-born of the *Ægyptians*, when he might have deſtroyed them all. It was in Commemoration of this Deliverance, that the Firſt-born of *Iſrael* were devoted to the Lord, as a ſmall Victim for ſuch a Favour, and as a Pledge of its Continuance throughout all future Generations. I muſt own, that this ſevere Law, by which were enjoin'd ſuch terrible Things in Righteouſneſs, was afterwards very much mitigated, or rather repealed. For the Almighty having hereby laid in and aſſerted his original Claim of Right to all the Firſt-born of *Iſrael*, as a juſt Acknowledgment for the Firſt-born of *Ægypt*, whom he had deſtroy'd by way of Pacification, for the Deliverance of his People, was afterwards, as an Act of Grace, pleaſed to accept of all the Males of *Levi*, for the firſt-born Males of all the other

other Tribes, as the Ranſom and Redemption of their *Lives* or *Souls*. And hereby God remitted the legal Obligation of human Sacrifices, and left it to the free Choice and voluntary Oblation of his People, whether their Burnt-Offerings of this Kind ſhould be either Male or Female, and whether they ſhould be of the Firſt-born or not.

Theoph. Pray, Mr. Preacher, ſtop a little; I can have Patience with you no longer. Your Imagination is over-heated, and you run beyond all the Bounds of Truth or Decency.

Philal. I thank you, Sir, for this ſeaſonable Interruption. I had almoſt talk'd myſelf out of Breath; beſides, I am very warm, and ſomewhat faint: Pray hand me a large Glaſs of Wine, with a little Water in it; I will drink your Health.——Here is ſoberly to your Converſion.

Theoph. You drink as if you were converting yourſelf. Will you have another Glaſs?

Philal. No, Sir; but the Reaſon of this ſeaſonable civil Rudeneſs.

Theoph. The Reaſon, I think, need not be far to ſeek. Your Heat and Zeal roſe ſo faſt againſt *Moſes* and the Law, that I thought it high Time to moderate your Paſſion, and give you Leiſure for a little cool and ſedate Reflection. That the original Claim of Right to the Firſt-born, was

claiming

claiming them as Sacrifices or Burnt-Offerings, and that God's reſerving them to himſelf was reſerving them to Deſtruction, is a Point not ſo very clear as to need no farther Proof. But yet I can excuſe it in a Friend; I take it to be only the Effect of a warm Imagination and intemperate Zeal, which you Preachers are very apt to run into. However, as I have ſtopt your preaching for a Minute or two, I hope you will now talk like another Man, and claim no Privilege.

Philal. You have put me into a Sort of Confuſion; I wiſh I may recover it. Men that preach Righteouſneſs for the Good of others do not uſe to be ſerv'd at this Rate. But to proceed; the Matter, I think, begins to clear up, and the Queſtion between us is this, Whether the Redemption of the Firſt-born of *Iſrael*, when God was pleaſed to accept the *Levitical* Males in Ranſom for the firſt-born Males of the twelve Tribes; whether this, I ſay, was a Redemption from Death and Slavery, or from Proſperity and Happineſs? Would the Caſe of the Firſt-born, I beſeech you, if they had not been redeemed or ranſomed, have been better or worſe? If better, they were redeemed from nothing but Good, from Life or Liberty; but if worſe, you muſt then ſay, that they were redeemed or ranſomed from ſome Pain or Penalty which they muſt otherwiſe have ſuffered. And what was this Pain or Puniſh-

ment from which they were ranſomed and redeemed? Was it from ſerving God in the Temple, as Miniſters of State, or from being the chief Servants and Attendants of the prime Miniſters? Or were they redeem'd from the Rights and Liberties, the Privileges and Immunities of the *Levites*, to be rewarded with the Miſery and Slavery of the common People? One would think, that Men ſhould not be redeemed from Lordſhip and Dominion into a State of Vaſſalage and Servitude; but this, it ſeems, was the Caſe here. The *Levites*, tho' Servants in the Temple, were Courtiers with the King's Livery, and had greater Rights and Immunities than any Prince or firſt Magiſtrate of another Tribe. *Levi* was a Tribe exempted from the Juriſdiction of the Law, and protected againſt it, as plainly appears from the Inſtance of the drunken *Levite* and his Concubine in the Book of *Judges*; for whoſe Sakes, for what paſt by Night in a drunken Frolick, and an accidental, ungovernable Mob, the whole Tribe of *Benjamin* was deſtroyed, excepting only ſix hundred Men, who fled to the Mountains, and hid themſelves among the Rocks. This was done while *Phineas*, the Grandſon of *Aaron*, was High Prieſt, and by the ſpecial Direction of the Oracle after the High Prieſt had conſulted him by *Urim* and *Thummim* three Times. But this whole Tranſaction was

ſuch

ſuch a Scene of Wickedneſs, Injuſtice and Prieſtcraft, that the Hiſtorian could not forbear concluding the Story with theſe remarkable Words, that *at that Time there was no King in* Iſrael, *but every Man did what ſeemed Good in his own Eyes.* But, ſurely, there was a God in *Iſrael* at that Time, and a High Prieſt who acted as his Vice-gerent, under the immediate Direction of the divine, infallible Oracle; but this ſhews, that there was no Law for Prieſts and *Levites* at that Time. But the Caſe is very plain, as I had ſhew'd before, that whom, or whatſoever, under this Law, was ſpecially reſerv'd by God himſelf, or vow'd to him by Man without an excepted Ranſom, that Perſon or Thing was hereby made the abſolute Property of the *Prieſt*, and he might either ſacrifice, or ſell as he thought fit, without any Right of Redemption or farther Account. Now under this Law, where ſuch Forfeitures muſt often be made, and where the abſolute deciſive Judgment upon Appeal lay in the *Prieſt*, who had the ſole Benefit by it; if there were not as many Sacrifices or Burnt-Offerings of the human Kind as there might have been, the Prieſt had doubtleſs good Reaſon for it, not to burn any Thing in common Caſes, that would yield Money. But ſuch a Power, tho' it might not often be executed, muſt make a Man as much dreaded, as the Devil himſelf, and as little reſpected. And this

in Proportion, must be always the Case, where any Body or Set of Men have an Interest separate from, and inconsistent with the Interest of the State or Society. This I take to be the true State of the Case under the *Mosaick* Œconomy, and by the essential Constitution of that Law. But as I may have hinted at some Things, which I have not now Time to enlarge on, I shall submit what has been here offered, to the mature Consideration of our *systematical Christian Clergy*, to whose Service I am most faithfully devoted, and for whose Sake I shall, upon any proper Occasion, be always ready to clear up any Thing that may yet seem doubtful to them.

Having thus given you a short View of *Religion* under the Law of *Moses*, so far as it relates to their Sacrifices, Atonements and Propitiations for Sin, which made a *principal Part of it*; I shall now turn your Thoughts to a more agreeable Subject, I mean, the Christian Scheme: In which, if I can but clear St. *Paul* from the Imputation of Judaism, and Christianity itself from the dead Weight of that most gross and carnal Institution, which has hitherto been laid upon it, I hope I shall not mispend your Time, or abuse your Patience; and that you will easily forgive the Freedom I must take with so good an Intention. I am, therefore, under this second general Head, to state and consider the Christian Doctrine

Doctrine of Redemption, or Deliverance from the Power of Sin and Satan by Jesus Christ. And here it is plain in general, that we are redeem'd or deliver'd from the prevailing Power and Dominion, and consequently, from the Punishment and Condemnation of Sin, by the clear Light, the powerful Motives, and the effectual Aid or Assistance which we are bless'd with under the Gospel Dispensation. This is that *Grace of God which has appeared to Mankind, by Jesus Christ, which both teacheth and enableth us to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godlily in the World.* From a State of gross Ignorance and Darkness, which had overspread the whole World, both *Jew* and *Gentile*, we are hereby recover'd to the true Knowledge of God and ourselves, or to all those moral Relations and Obligations which we stand in to the supream Being, and to one another: From a great Uncertainty concerning a future State, and the Concern of divine Providence in the Government of the World, we are furnished with clearer Conceptions, and brought to a more satisfactory Way of reasoning about these Matters: From the proud and vain Conceit of our own natural Abilities and Self-sufficiency, we are brought to the humble Sense and Acknowledgment of our natural Weakness and Inability, and of the Necessity of a divine Assistance, which

which is at the ſame Time promiſed and ſecured to us, upon our ſincere Requeſts and humble Addreſſes to God for it. If any one ſhould here ſay, that theſe being natural Truths and moral Obligations evident to Reaſon, there could be no Need of Revelation to diſcover them; perhaps he may have been a little too haſty in this Concluſion. The Books of *Euclid*, and *Newton*'s *Principia*, contain, no doubt, natural Truths, and ſuch as are neceſſarily founded in the Reaſon of Things; and yet, I think, none but a Fool or a Madman would ſay, that he could have informed himſelf in theſe Matters as well without them, and that he is not at all obliged to any ſuch Maſter or Teacher. Our Saviour's Doctrines appeared to be the true and genuine Principles of Nature and Reaſon, when he had ſet them in a proper Light, and as ſoon as they came to be duly conſidered and weigh'd; but yet they were ſuch as the People had never heard or thought of before, and never would without ſuch an Inſtructor, and ſuch Means and Opportunities of Knowledge. They who would judge uprightly of the Strength of human Reaſon in Matters of Morality and Religion, under the preſent corrupt and degenerate State of Mankind, ought to take their Eſtimate from thoſe Parts of the World which never had the Benefit of Revelation; and this, perhaps, might make them leſs

con-

conceited of themſelves, and more thankful to God for the Light of the Goſpel. If the Religion of Nature under the preſent Pravity and Corruption of Mankind, was written with ſufficient Strength and Clearneſs upon every Man's Heart; why might not a *Chineſe* or an *Indian* draw up as good a Syſtem of natural Religion, as a Chriſtian, and why have we never met with any ſuch? But let us take *Confucius*, *Zoroaſter*, *Plato*, *Socrates*, or the greateſt Moraliſt that ever liv'd without the Light of Revelation, and it will appear, that their beſt Syſtems of Morality were intermix'd and blended with ſo much Superſtition, and ſo many groſs Abſurdities, as quite eluded and defeated the main Deſign of them. And when any one can ſhew the contrary, I promiſe to retract what I have here ſaid, and give up this Defence of Chriſtianity.

But the greateſt Difficulty ſtill remains, in which Chriſtianity itſelf ſeems to be clogg'd with the *Jewiſh* Doctrine of Propitiation, or a penal Atonement by Blood, as a neceſſary Means of ſatisfying the Juſtice, and pacifying the Anger of an offended Deity. What the State of this Caſe was, and the natural Conſequences of it under the *Moſaick* Law, I have conſidered already; and now I ſhall endeavour to ſhew how the Matter ſtands, and ought to be underſtood in the Chriſtian Scheme. The Words Sacrifice, Offering for Sin, Atonement, Propitia-

tion, Redemption, *&c.* being ſo often uſed in the *New Teſtament* with regard to the Death of Chriſt, and having been commonly taken in a too ſtrict and literal Senſe, has mightily perplex'd all the Syſtems of Chriſtianity, ſince learned Men have thought fit to make a Myſtery, and an occult Science of it. But, I hope, when once this Matter comes to be duly conſidered, and better underſtood, it may not prove ſo great an Obſtacle and Stumbling-block, as it has hitherto done. It is too plain to be deny'd, that a Miſunderſtanding here, and a moſt abſurd and irrational Doctrine founded upon ſuch a Miſtake, have always prov'd in the Event the ſtrong Hold of Sin and Satan in the Chriſtian World; while Chriſtians have flatter'd themſelves with the Hopes of Salvation upon eaſier Terms than others, and upon ſuch Terms as cannot at all conſiſt with the Impartiality, paternal Goodneſs, and rectoral Juſtice of God, as the common Father of Mankind, and the wiſe and righteous Governor of the World. But before I proceed farther it will be neceſſary to lay down ſome plain undeniable Principle, ſuch as may be ſecurely reſted on as a common Conceſſion in this Debate, and which I take to be this: *That God in the laſt Day will reward or puniſh every Man according to his Works, or according to the Deeds done in the Body, whether they have been morally good or evil.*

God

God being no Reſpecter of Perſons, in every Nation and every Age, he that feareth God and worketh Righteouſneſs ſhall be accepted of him, whether he has lived under the Goſpel or not: And on the other Hand, God in the Day of Accounts will certainly reject all the Workers of Iniquity, whatever Faith they may have had in Chriſt, and even though they may have propheſy'd, or wrought Miracles in his Name. If there be any Thing plain and clear, either in Scripture or Reaſon, it is this, that God, as the common Father of Mankind, and the wiſe and righteous Governor of the World, will not and cannot reject and condemn any Man that makes it his chief Deſire and Endeavour to ſerve and pleaſe him, or to know and do his Will: And on the other Hand, God will not and cannot, conſiſtent with governing Juſtice, pardon the Guilty, or accept and reward a Man who makes it his principal End to gratify his Appetites and Paſſions, and purſues an animal Felicity in himſelf, contrary to the Nature and Will of God, to the publick Good, and the moral Reaſon or Fitneſs of Things. Now this being plainly the Caſe, I would fain know what Room or Occaſion there can be for the common *Jewiſh* Hypotheſis of Satisfaction, or how this ſhould alter the Caſe, whether it be ſuppoſed or not? That God ſhould puniſh the Innocent for the Guilty, and ſpare the Guilty,

for this very Reaſon, becauſe an innocent Perſon has ſuffered what they ought to have ſuffered, is a very ſtrange Doctrine; but ſtranger ſtill, that ſuch a Subverſion of all moral Government, and inverting the Courſe of all rectoral Juſtice, ſhould be neceſſary to ſatisfy that very Juſtice, and that there ſhould be no reaſonable Ground or Hope of Pardon without it.

That God being once offended is in himſelf implacable, and a conſuming Fire, and that he cannot, conſiſtent with his Nature and Attributes, pardon Sin without ſome Satisfaction beyond what the Offender himſelf was capable of making in his own Perſon, is, I think, the common Principle of all thoſe who maintain this Doctrine in general. But whether this penal Satisfaction muſt be made in Kind, whether ſome Expedient may not be found out for it, by rendering an Equivalent, is a mere Trifle, and not worth debating; tho' this has been the only Difference, and Matter of Conteſt between the moderate and immoderate Men in the Caſe before us. For it is certain, that where any Satisfaction at all is neceſſary, God can admit of none but what is ſufficient, juſt, and reaſonable; and juſt and reaſonable Satisfaction once offered and propoſed, cannot be refuſed or rejected by any juſt and reaſonable Being. And where any ſuch juſt, reaſonable and ſufficient Satisfaction has been made, the

the Acquitment or Remiſſion of the Penalty, or ſuſpending the Execution of the Law, muſt after that be an Act of Juſtice, or a legal Demand, and cannot be conſidered as a Pardon or Act of Grace. So far as the Satisfaction is full and complete, it muſt intitle the Debtor or Offender to an Acquitment in Law; but where it is not thus full and complete, it can be no Satisfaction, and therefore muſt be a ſtrange Sort of Equivalent, that is equivalent to nothing.

But if Chriſt has made a full and complete Satisfaction to divine Juſtice for the Sins of the *whole World*, it would be proper to declare for what Sins, and under what Circumſtances of ſinning this Satisfaction has been made; and whether or no it has been made for Sins not repented of and forſaken. If Chriſt has ſatisfy'd the Law and the Juſtice of God, for Impenitency and Diſobedience, this would be a great Privilege indeed, and every Man in the World would be an orthodox, ſyſtematical Chriſtian upon this Suppoſition. But the Judaizers have never yet had the Face to aſſert this directly, whatever they may have done by plain and neceſſary Conſequences. God has ſufficiently declared, by the moſt numerous and expreſs Aſſertions in Scripture, that he will pardon Sin upon no other Condition, but perſonal Repentance and Reformation; and that he will never reject or caſt off a penitent, returning Sinner. And this

being the eternal, immutable Voice and Law of God in Nature and Reaſon as well as Scripture, the Caſe muſt be the ſame, whether Chriſt had ſuffer'd and died or not. And therefore our ſyſtematical, Chriſtian Clergy, or right orthodox Divines, have only this to ſay, that the Death of Chriſt, as a Satisfaction for Sin, was neceſſary to enable God to pardon Sin upon Repentance, and which he could not otherwiſe have reaſonably done. And this is ſaying, that God cannot remit the Puniſhment of Sin at all, even upon the Repentance or Reformation of the Sinner, without ſome prior Satisfaction or Payment from a third Perſon, and without which Satisfaction his Juſtice muſt exert itſelf in the moſt implacable, inexorable Revenge; and conſequently, that he has no ſuch eſſential Attribute as Mercy, or any Diſpoſition to Pardon and Forgiveneſs in his own Nature. But our ſyſtematical Divines have been always exceedingly puzzled and perplex'd, whenever they attempt to reconcile the Neceſſity of a prior Satisfaction, or Payment by a Surety, with the Freedom and Gratuity of a conſequent Pardon upon perſonal Repentance. Theſe are the two Rocks which they always ſplit upon, and whenever they would avoid the one, they are driven upon the other. They cannot deny that God's pardoning Mercy is free and gratuitous; and yet they muſt aſſert that

that it was purchaſed, and that the full Price and Value of it was paid down before it was granted. And here, our Theological Schematiſts ſo plainly rob God of his pardoning Mercy, and aſcribe all the Honour and Glory of it to Chriſt the Surety, that it was needful to think of ſome Evaſion or other, in order to elude and bear off the Force of ſuch an inſufferable, and moſt ſhocking Suppoſition. To which Purpoſe they have commonly urged two Things:

1ſt. That the Praiſe and Glory of our Redemption muſt be primarily due to God, becauſe he contriv'd and found out this Method of Satisfaction and Pardon, which could not otherwiſe have entered into the Thoughts of Men or Angels. And,

2dly. Becauſe this Method of Redemption, Satisfaction, and Pardon, was after all *Quid recuſabile*; it was ſomething that God might have refuſed, and have executed the violated Law without the leaſt Mitigation or Mercy.

But, in the firſt Place, the remitting a Debt, or forgiving an Injury, in Mercy to the Debtor or Offender, as an Act of Grace, is a very different Thing from finding out a Surety or Friend to pay the Debt, or make complete Satisfaction for the Offence. For in one of theſe Caſes there is Pardon or Forgiveneſs in the Creditor or Perſon injured; but in the other not. It would be Cruelty and Injuſtice in any Creditor, or Perſon in-

jured and offended, to throw a Man into Priſon, and execute the Rigour of the Law upon him, when he knows that the Debtor or Offender has a Surety and Friend at Hand, who would be ready to make full Satisfaction for him, if he was but apply'd to. And this is all the Mercy theſe Men aſcribe to God, which is really no Mercy at all, but a Piece of common, natural Juſtice. Not to puniſh without Neceſſity, or to remit the Penalty where the Debt, Offence or Injury may be as well compenſated and ſatisfy'd for without it, is not Mercy, but ſtrict Juſtice. As to what is farther urged, that the Satisfaction of Chriſt was *Quid recuſabile*, and ſuch as God might have refuſed; the Anſwer already given muſt here ſerve again: If this was a juſt and reaſonable Satisfaction, it could not have been juſtly and reaſonably refuſed; and if it was not a juſt and reaſonable Satisfaction, it could not have been juſtly and reaſonably accepted.

As God has every where declared in Scripture, that he will accept of Repentance; and as this is a Law founded in Nature and Reaſon, ſo this is the only Reparation that a Sinner is capable of making, or God of receiving; unleſs we would diveſt him of his natural Goodneſs, Compaſſion, and pardoning Mercy, as Attributes not at all eſſential to him. For if God cannot, conſiſtent with his Juſtice, pardon Sin upon Repentance, without ſome farther

ther Satisfaction not in the Offender's Power; it muſt follow, that all our Thanks and Praiſes, Obedience and Love, muſt be due primarily and chiefly to the Perſon who has made this Satisfaction for us, and that we cannot receive any Thing at all as a free Gift or Act of Grace from God. And this is ſo plain and natural a Conſequence, that they who ſhould *worſhip the Father in Spirit and Truth*, do not, upon this Principle, worſhip him at all, but only fear and dread him under the Terror of Slaves, while all their real Veneration, Love, and Obedience are paid to the *Son*. And in Conſequence of this, there are more Thanks and Praiſes offered up in the Chriſtian Churches for an Atonement and Pacification of divine Vengeance by the Blood of Chriſt, than for all the Mercies and free Gifts we receive from God; and while we pretend to compliment the *Father of Mercies* as the free Donor of theſe Things, we in effect declare, at the ſame Time, that we are not at all obliged to him for ſuch Favours, and that we can receive nothing good from him, but what had been fairly bought and paid for.

That the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, or the Redundancy of his Merit, could not be placed to our Account, ſo as to make any Part of our juſtifying Righteouſneſs in the Sight of God, ſeems farther evident from hence, that all that was done or ſuffered by him was neceſſary to

himſelf, and upon his *own Account*. For having in Submiſſion to the Will of God, freely undertaken the Work he was ſent about, he was as much bound to Obedience herein, as we are in our proper Sphere and Capacity. As Chriſt was under a Law from God, and acted with the Proſpect of a glorious perſonal Reward, he could not have fail'd, in any Part of his Obedience, without loſing that Reward, and forfeiting the divine Favour. It is true, he obey'd perfectly this Law of God, and finiſh'd every Thing that was given him to do; but herein he did no more than what he was bound to, and nothing leſs could have been accepted from him. And, however free and voluntary the Obedience of Chriſt was, yet it was a neceſſary Obligation laid upon him by the Will and Law of God, and from which he would gladly have been excuſed, had his heavenly Father thought fit. He therefore obey'd, in the Point of Martyrdom, from the ſame Principle which every wiſe and good Man muſt always act upon, by chuſing the greateſt Sufferings in this World rather than diſobey God, and loſe the Hopes and Proſpects of Futurity. Now here certainly could be no ſuch Thing as Supererogation, or redundant Merit, where nothing was done or ſuffered, but under an indiſpenſable, perſonal Obligation.

Chriſt himſelf ſeems to have had no ſuch Notion of the Neceſſity of his Death,

as

as a Propitiation and Atonement for the Sins of the World, and an indiſpenſable Condition of the Salvation of Mankind, when he pray'd ſo often and earneſtly not to be put upon any ſuch Trial, and that if poſſible this Cup of Sorrow might paſs from him. No Man can imagine, that Chriſt would have ſpent a whole Night in ſuch paſſionate Prayers and Supplications to God, in order to prevent a Thing which he certainly knew muſt happen, and which had been previouſly agreed on between the Father and him. Would the common Saviour and Friend of Mankind have thus declin'd a few Hours bodily Pain, in a Way that many Thouſands had ſuffer'd before him, had he thought it neceſſary to deſtroy the Power of the Devil, and to open the Gates of Heaven to a whole World of loſt, undone Creatures? In ſhort, ſince perſonal Merit and Demerit have a neceſſary, immutable Relation to the individual Perſons themſelves, and cannot poſſibly be communicated from one Perſon to another, it muſt be an eternal Contradiction in the Nature and Reaſon of Things, to ſuppoſe or ſay, that Chriſt was ever puniſhed for our Sins, or that we are rewarded for his Righteouſneſs: Becauſe this would be rewarding and puniſhing Men without any Regard to the natural Individuality, or moral Characters of the Perſons thus rewarded or puniſhed. They who have founded this Doctrine of imputed Righteouſneſs

teouſneſs and Merit, upon ſome metaphorical Expreſſions of St. *Paul*, have not well conſidered how little this can ſerve their Purpoſe, when they come to apply it literally to the Chriſtian Scheme. I think, I have plainly ſhew'd that there was no ſuch Thing as Pardon or Forgiveneſs under the Law of *Moſes*, that no vicarious Sacrifice was there ever admitted, and that their Notion of Propitiation, or Atonement by the Action of the Prieſt in ſprinkling the Blood, was a mere prieſtly Cheat, and a groſs Impoſition upon the common Senſe and Underſtandings of the People. And therefore, I cannot but look upon ſuch Chriſtian Schematics as in a very bad Way, who ſhall be ſtill forced to build upon this Sort of Sand.

If the Deliverance of Mankind from the Power and Dominion of Satan, had been by a proper Purchaſe or Price of Redemption paid for them, it ſeems moſt reaſonable, that the Price of Redemption ſhould be paid to the Conqueror, who had them in Poſſeſſion, whoſe Priſoners they were, and who thereupon pleaded a Right in them by Conqueſt, *i. e.* the *Devil*. It is certainly ſo in all other Caſes of this Kind, however there came to be an Exception here. But, in Anſwer to this, in the preſent Caſe, it is like, it may be ſaid, that the Devil here was only God's Goal-Keeper. Mankind having withdrawn their Allegiance from God, their rightful Sovereign, he

he hereupon charged the Devil with them: Here then they were ſtill the Captives or Priſoners of the Lord; but upon their Revolt and Rebellion he committed them to the Safe-Guard of Satan, with ſtrict Orders not to let them go till ſuch Time as a ſufficient Ranſom, or valuable Price of Redemption, ſhould be found or offered for them. But no ſuch Ranſom being found, God was obliged, at laſt, to pay himſelf, and to lay down the whole Price of Redemption in the Blood of his own Son. But, I am loth to purſue theſe Metaphors any farther, and had not taken even this Liberty, but to ſhew what Work, Men muſt make of Scripture, when figurative and allegorical Expreſſions come to be interpreted and applied in a literal Senſe. And indeed, all Myſtery in Religion is nothing elſe but Allegory, literally applied and underſtood, or which is the ſame Thing, miſapplied and not underſtood at all.

What has been here offer'd, may, perhaps, be ſufficient to overthrow all the Schemes and Hypotheſes hitherto advanced, concerning imputed Righteouſneſs, redundant Merit, and vicarious Sacrifices. I ſhall not now ſtand to apply this in particular to all the different Syſtems of our Chriſtian Schematiſts, as they have variouſly alter'd and mended it, according to their ſeveral Fancies: But, I may obſerve in general, that the *Antinomians*, who carried this Principle to its natural and juſt Length,

Length, and took all its Conſequences, conſtructed and put together a Scheme of Satisfaction, which was abſolutely falſe in the Whole, and every Part of it, as contrary to both the natural and moral Perfections of God, and to the Reaſon of Things. But yet this Syſtem was pretty well conſiſtent with itſelf, as any intire Scheme of Falſhood may be: But the moderate *Calviniſts* and *Arminians*, ſuch as *Twiſs*, *Hammond*, *Grotius*, *Stillingfleet*, &c. by trying to mend it, form'd a Scheme of Satisfaction, with ſuch a Compoſition of Truth and Falſhood as prov'd like Iron and Clay, that would by no Means mix and hang together. For which their Adverſaries, on the other Hand, have juſtly reproach'd them as introducing a mongrel, linſy-woolſy Religion, where Men muſt be ſaved and juſtified, partly by the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and partly by their own Works, or by Faith and Repentance, conſidered as natural free Actions of their own. And thus far they are ſurely in the Right, that it is abſurd, unreaſonable, and contradictory to ſuppoſe, that Part of the Righteouſneſs of Chriſt is imputed to us, but not the Whole; and that Chriſt hath made a full and compleat Satisfaction for ſome Sins, but not for all. To ſay, that we are fully and compleatly juſtify'd by Chriſt's Righteouſneſs, and yet, that our own perſonal Righteouſneſs is neceſſary to our Juſtification, is a plain

Contradiction: And to ſay that we are juſtify'd and accepted partly by Chriſt's Righteouſneſs, and partly by our own, is a moderating or compounding Scheme, that the *Antinomians* could never underſtand. For, ſay they, Chriſt will certainly be a whole Saviour or none at all; he will never ſuffer you to part Stakes with him, or ſhare the Honour of juſtifying Righteouſneſs with you. And here the Matter has ſtuck between the ſyſtematical *Nomians* and *Antinomians* of all Sorts, *i. e.* between thoſe Chriſtian Schematiſts, who having firſt miſunderſtood the Scriptures, have afterwards laboured hard to reconcile their Miſunderſtandings to Truth and Reaſon.

But, if all this ſhould ſignify nothing, one Thing, I think, is very ſtrange, that Jeſus Chriſt, or any other Lawgiver in the World, ſhould ſuffer Death to make Satisfaction and Atonement for Diſobedience to himſelf, or to nullify and deſtroy the Obligation of all his own Laws. And yet, this is the Mercy of the Goſpel which the Clergy are willing to allow you, in lieu of ſome Conceſſions which you ought to make them for your own Advantage and theirs. That God in the laſt Day will judge every Man according to his Works, and reward or puniſh them according to their Deeds done in the Body, whether they have been morally good or evil, is not true, in the Opinion of theſe Gentlemen, nor conſiſtent with the *Grace of Chriſt*,

Christ, or the Rights of the Clergy under the Gospel. You may sin on as long as you please, wickedly and presumptuously against all the Laws of Christ, and yet in your last expiring Moments, receive a full and free Pardon under the Hand and Seal of Christ himself, by the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel. You may repent every Day of your Life, of all Sins *known* and *unknown*, i. e. you may daily forsake all Sin, and daily continue in the Sins which you daily forsake or repent of, and yet have as full and as free a Pardon at last, as if you had never sinn'd at all. And let any Man tell me whether this be not a Privilege, and a Privilege contrary to the Law of Nature, and directly opposite to the great Christian Law and Rule of Judgment in the last Day; and when God will award every Man according to his Works, or according to the Deeds done in the Body, whether they have been good or bad. I may possibly assume this Subject again before we conclude; but in the mean while, this will be sufficient to shew, that the Christian Clergy will not be trusted for nothing, that they expect nothing from you without an Equivalent, and that Christ has enabled them to bear you harmless, tho' they should not be the best Preachers of moral Truth and Righteousness. And thus, while they eternally declaim against Vice and Immorality, Atheism

iſm and Infidelity, they plainly ſupport Unrighteouſneſs, and maintain the ſtrong Holds of Satan in the Chriſtian World, by giving a moſt falſe and unnatural Turn to the great Law and Rule of Judgment, as before-mentioned. But, as I ſee you can ſcarce forbear interrupting me, I muſt beg your Patience at preſent, to aſſure you, that this will more evidently appear afterwards, when we come to what is commonly call'd the Chriſtian Doctrine of Pardon upon Repentance.

But, by this Time, I preſume, you are ready to aſk me, how it ſhould come about, that the Death of Chriſt is ſo often ſpoken of, and repreſented in the *New Teſtament*, as a *Propitiation*, an *Atonement*, a *Purchaſe*, *Ranſom*, and *Price* of *Redemption*, &c. Does all this ſignify nothing, or are we to underſtand nothing by it? Yes, no Doubt, there is ſome Meaning in it, as well as in all other figurative Expreſſions, Metaphors, and Allegories ſo often uſed in Scripture, both in the *Old Teſtament* and *New*. This, therefore, is only aſking, Why Men in Compliance with the common Uſe of ſpeaking, or for the Sake of Elocution, and to make the ſtronger Impreſſions upon thoſe they apply to, ſhould ever expreſs themſelves in a figurative and metaphorical Way? Such Forms of Speech are well enough underſtood in a living Language, by ſuch as uſe it, but may occaſion great Difficulties to Strangers,

eſpecially in a too literal Tranſlation, where the different Turn of Thinking and incidental Ideas in one Country, may, without any Ground from the Reaſon of Things, or Propriety of Speech, be tranſpoſed and applied to another. And this has been the general Unhappineſs of ſuch as are obliged to read Tranſlations, which commonly regard only the bare Grammatical Conſtruction of Words out of one Language into another, without Reſpect to the different Idioms, or ever entering into the Spirit and Deſign of the Author. And here the original Author being made to ſpeak a Language which he never underſtood, is interpreted by Rules of Criticiſm which he never thought of. The different Genius of Languages, the particular Circumſtances and prevailing Opinions of the People in different Ages and Countries, where ſuch Languages have been uſed, and the general Motives, View and Deſign of an Author, are doubtleſs the moſt material and eſſential Points in all true and juſt Criticiſm. And hence it has commonly happened, that our greateſt Criticks have been the moſt inſufferable Triflers, and that their critical Skill hath been employed in nothing but a childiſh School-Play about Words, without any Regard to the Hiſtory, Chronology, Religion, Policy, or any of the peculiar Circumſtances of the People, whoſe Language they pretend to criticize upon. And from hence we find,

that Men of the beſt natural Senſe, when they come to ſtudy ſuch Criticks and Criticiſms, are turned off their Bias, and inſtead of being put upon a Search after Truth, their Wits are ſent a Wool-gathering. But, in the Caſe before us, of St. *Paul*'s uſing ſo often as he does theſe figurative, metaphorical Expreſſions, as *Jewiſh* Law Terms, we need not go far for a Reaſon; ſince the ſtrong Prejudices and Prepoſſeſſions of the People he had to deal with, and the Principles of Caution and human Prudence he was obliged to act upon, are very evident. It was an eſtabliſh'd Principle with the whole *Jewiſh* Nation, that *without ſhedding of Blood there could be no Remiſſion.* And they had ſuch an Opinion of their legal, propitiatory Sacrifices and Atonements by Blood, that had St. *Paul* told them, in plain Terms, that there was nothing in it, and that they had herein been groſſly abuſed and impoſed on by their Prieſts, they would certainly have ſtoned him. But, I think, he was much in the Right not to have his Brains beat out by ſuch a Rabble, but to ſave his Life for more valuable Purpoſes. And ſince they could not be ſatisfied but with Blood, and thought that God himſelf could be no otherwiſe ſatisfied or atoned, St. *Paul* had here the beſt Opportunity in the World to reconcile them to the Death of Chriſt, as a common Saviour upon their own Principles. Chriſt crucify'd was their greateſt

ſtumbling Block: This, in their Apprehenſions, cut them off from all Hopes of a Deliverance by him; if he could not ſave himſelf, how ſhould he ſave and reſtore the Nation? Now, here it may be obſerv'd, that this Apoſtle, without encountering their main Prejudice, or taking them off from the popular prevailing Expectation of a national Reſtauration and Deliverance, artfully applies to them, in order to bring them into the Chriſtian Scheme, and reconcile them to Chriſt as their true Meſſiah. And here he took Occaſion to put a figurative and allegorical Conſtruction upon their legal Sacrifices, as having only ſhadow'd and typify'd the great Sacrifice of Chriſt the Meſſiah. So far as a bloody Sacrifice might be neceſſary to Pardon, they had here the moſt valuable and precious Blood of all. For Chriſt having diſcovered or revealed the true Religion to the World, ſeal'd it as a Martyr with his Blood, and died in the Defence of it, and thereby given the ſtrongeſt Teſtimony to the Truth of it, and that he was no Deceiver or Impoſtor in it, and had no worldly, carnal Intereſt to ſerve; it may be truly ſaid, in a Senſe that is common enough, and very well underſtood, without being attended with any of the foregoing Abſurdities, that the Doctrines of our Salvation coſt him his Life, that he died for us, and that the Goſpel, with all its Benefits, accrue to us at the Price of his Blood.

Blood. And the ſame Thing, in a lower Acceptation, might be ſaid of any great and good Man who ventures his Life for his Country, or for the common Good of Mankind, and who dies in the Defence of ſuch a Cauſe, and obtains the Advantages of it to the World at the Expence of his Life and Blood. And yet No-body would ſay, in this Caſe, that ſuch an one had been offered up as a Sacrifice of Atonement to appeaſe the Vengeance of an angry Deity, or to render God propitious to your Country, or to the World. And tho' ſuch Terms as Redemption, Purchaſe, Ranſom, *&c.* might be uſed in this Caſe, eſpecially by one under St. *Paul*'s Circumſtances; yet the Metaphor being ſo natural and eaſy, ought not to be ſtrain'd to the rigid, literal, and moſt abſurd Senſe of the *Jewiſh* Law.

Having thus far clear'd the Way, I ſhall proceed now to lay before you the true, genuine, and ſcriptural Ends and Reaſons of Chriſt's Death, and therein let you ſee, as I go along, what are the real Benefits and Advantages which we reap from it; in which I hope to be conſiſtent with Scripture and myſelf; and if I ſhould not happen, in this Caſe, to be an *orthodox Chriſtian*, I ſhall content myſelf with the Honour of being a *Chriſtian Deiſt*. Chriſt therefore gave up his Life and Blood in the Cauſe of Virtue and true Religion, as I apprehend, upon the follow-

ing Grounds and Reaſons, or for thoſe Ends and Purpoſes.

1ſt, That he might hereby complete his own Obedience in the higheſt Inſtance of Submiſſion and Reſignation to the Will of God; and that he might in Conſequence hereof obtain that high Honour and glorious Reward, which had been propoſed to and ſet before him, and in the Hope and Proſpect of which he acted all along. His Death was neceſſary or expedient upon this Account, that he might hereby exemplify and prove his own Faithfulneſs under the moſt difficult and trying Circumſtances, and in Conſequence of ſuch Obedience, recommend himſelf to God for the higheſt and moſt diſtinguiſhing Reward. This is ſo evident throughout the whole *New Teſtament*, that it muſt be needleſs to quote particular Texts and Paſſages for it. Nothing can be plainer than this, that Chriſt had a Law given him from God, which he was bound to fulfil; and that he could not have been exempted from any Part of it without Failure of Obedience, and Forfeiture of divine Favour. And therefore his willing, chearful Obedience herein, and his abſolute Submiſſion to the Will of his heavenly Father, under the moſt trying and ſhocking Circumſtances, as it diſcover'd the great Strength of his Virtue, unſhaken Fidelity, and Love to God; ſo it was the Ground of all his conſequent,

ſequent, peculiar Glory and Reward. And this certainly redounds to the immortal and unrival'd Glory of our Chriſtian Prophet, who is the only Legiſlator in Matters of Religion, that ever exemplify'd his own Doctrines in Practice, or acted up to the Strictneſs and Purity of his own Laws. He did not, like the Heathen Philoſophers, content himſelf with Speculations and dry Reaſonings about Virtue and true Religion, and then leave this noble Cauſe to ſhift for itſelf, whenever it required a more painful and hazardous Defence. He did not pretend to philoſophize, where he dared not ſuffer for the Cauſe of God and Religion, and for the common Good of Mankind: But after he had introduced and recommended the true Religion to the World, by his holy exemplary Life, by the intrinſick, divine Energy of his Doctrines upon the Hearts and Conſciences of Men, and by his extraordinary, miraculous Works for the Good of Mankind; he ſtood to it to the very laſt, died a Martyr in the Defence of it, and ſeal'd its Truth with his Blood. And here I dare put the Authority of Chriſt, and Credit of Chriſtianity to this Iſſue; againſt *Moſes*, *Confucius*, *Zoroaſter*, *Mahomet*, or any other Prophet or great Man, who may be ſet up in Competition with, or in Oppoſition to this great Prophet, and Confeſſor of our Religion. Let the *Jews*, the *Chineſe*, the *Perſians*, the

Turks, or any People upon the Earth beſides the *Chriſtians*, make it appear, that the Authors and Founders of their ſeveral Religions did not in many Inſtances, give up the Cauſe of Virtue, and the common Good of Mankind, to comply with the prevailing Prejudices of the People, and to ſave themſelves harmleſs; nay, that they did not intermix and blend the groſſeſt Abſurdities in Belief, and many groſs Superſtitions and Immoralities in Practice, with their very Schemes and Syſtems of Religion. And hereby thoſe great Men, tho' they might enlighten and reform a very conſiderable Part of Mankind, and do much Good in the World, yet they eluded in great Meaſure their own Deſign, while they made it plainly appear, that they had no Religion for which they thought it worth their while to ſuffer much, or any future Hope for which they could part with the Riches, Honours, and Proſperity of this World. This is, I think, a plain Matter of Fact, and when the contrary can be made out, the Name of Chriſt ſhall ſtoop and give Place to any other Name under Heaven, that can plead a better Title to the univerſal Honour, Love, and Eſteem of Mankind. But,

2dly, It was reaſonable and fit, that Chriſt ſhould thus ſuffer and die in the Defence of the true Religion, that he might hereby evince and exemplify the univerſal, abſolute

Authority of God, his Impartiality and immutable Righteouſneſs, and the indiſpenſable Neceſſity of Obedience, as the Terms or Conditions of Acceptance and Reward to all Perſons, at all Times, and under all poſſible Circumſtances of Action. If a Perſon circumſtantiated as Chriſt was, could not be excuſed or exempted from any Part of that Obedience which God had aſſigned him, and required of him, as the Condition of his Acceptance and Reward, much leſs can any other Perſon or Perſons under other Circumſtances, expect the Favour of God upon any other or eaſier Terms. The Death of Chriſt therefore, and the Reaſon or Expediency of it, as here aſſign'd, was a full and evident Demonſtration to the whole World, that God is no Reſpecter of Perſons, that perſonal Righteouſneſs, or a perſonal Compliance with the Terms of Acceptance according to Men's different Capacities, and the Laws which they are under, muſt be abſolutely and indiſpenſably neceſſary, and that no Redundancy of Merit, or any perſonal, imputed Righteouſneſs of another, can be ever taken in Account, as an Equivalent to this. It concerns therefore, the Patrons of redundant Merit, and imputed Righteouſneſs, to conſider well with themſelves, how far their Scheme can be reconciled to this plain, natural Principle of all moral Truth and Rectitude, and yet,

ſtill

ſtill made conſiſtent and intelligible; and whether they are not hereby laying a Foundation to ſupport Iniquity by Grace, under a Pretence of honouring Chriſt, and doing Juſtice to his perſonal Merits and Righteouſneſs. But whatever ſuch Theologaſters, Creed-Makers, and Syſtem-Mongers may ſay, or imagine, I am very well ſatisfy'd that there is a Day coming, in which no ſuch Plea will be of any Avail, and in which all the Preſumption, and falſe Hope built upon it, muſt fall to the Ground. And this I am as ſure of, as I am that there is any ſuch Thing as a Goſpel Revelation, or that God has ever made known his Will, in any Matter at all, to Mankind, either by the Chriſtian Revelation, or in any other Way.

When the Goſpel of Salvation, or the Doctrines of Faith and Repentance, was firſt preach'd by the Apoſtles to the whole World, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, they had an Offer of a general Act of Grace or Indemnity for all their paſt Sins, which they had committed under their *Jewiſh* or *Pagan* State of Darkneſs, provided they would then come in, own Chriſt as a true Prophet, and obey the Will of God according to this Goſpel for the Time to come. But this general Pardon, Act of Grace, or Indemnity for all paſt Sins was never intended to be extended farther, ſo as to take in all, or any wilful preſumptuous Sins committed under the Goſ-

pel

pel Diſpenſation itſelf, after Men had ſworn themſelves to Chriſt, by Baptiſm or publick Profeſſion, and thereby engaged themſelves in the Chriſtian Covenant: But ſo far from this, that no Grace of the Goſpel, or Benefit from Chriſt, could ever be pleaded from any ſuch Sins. *They that ſinn'd wilfully or preſumptuouſly, after they had received the Knowledge of the Truth, had no farther Sacrifice for Sin*, Heb. x. 26. That is, they could not in this Caſe plead that general Act of Grace or Indemnity from Chriſt, which they were intitled to upon their firſt Converſion. But the ſame Apoſtle in the ſame Epiſtle, Chap. vi. 4, 5, 6, expreſſes this Doctrine of Repentance and Pardon for Sins committed under the Goſpel, more fully, abſolutely, and clearly, in theſe Words: *For it is impoſſible that they who were once inlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, if they fall away, ſhould be renewed again* BY REPENTANCE; *ſince they crucify to themſelves again the Son of God, and (make a Mock of him, or) put him to open Shame.* Now it is not here ſaid or ſuppoſed, that if a Man ſins wilfully and preſumptuouſly, or falls off from the Truth after he has receiv'd the Goſpel, profeſs'd Faith in Chriſt, and experienced the great Advantage of ſuch a Change, that it is impoſſible for him to repent or forſake any ſuch Sin

or

or Courſe of Sinning, and that he can never be brought to any ſuch Repentance: But that, ſuppoſing ſuch Repentance, it is impoſſible to *reſtore* or *renew* him by it to the ſame State of an abſolute, free Pardon for all paſt Sins; or that Repentance in this Caſe cannot intitle him to that general Act of Grace and Indemnity, which was granted him upon his firſt Converſion and Engagement in the Chriſtian Covenant. For to ſuppoſe this would make the Goſpel an Act of Grace and Indemnity for all Sinners, at all Times, and under all Circumſtances, which would be the greateſt Encouragement to Sin in the World; and this, I fear, has been too commonly the Caſe, by miſunderſtanding the Goſpel Terms of Pardon upon Repentance. For to expect Pardon every Day upon daily Repentance for all Sins known and unknown is a moſt groſs Abſurdity and Contradiction, ſince this would be to repent of, that is, forſake all Sin known and unknown every Day, and yet daily continue in the ſame Practice. But ſurely this could never be the general Act of Grace or Indemnity offered in the Goſpel for all *paſt Sins*. When once Men had receiv'd Chriſt by their publick baptiſmal Profeſſion, and engaged themſelves to a holy Life, they were never afterwards upon Breach of this Covenant to plead the ſame original Grace, or Indemnity, for their wilful preſumptuous Sins under the

the Gospel, in Contempt of their own Vows and Covenant Engagements, when they had *crucify'd to themselves afresh the Son of God, and put him to open Shame.* That the Sin or Method of Sinning, which was not pardonable upon Repentance, and against which no Grace or Favour of the Gospel could be pleaded, was not, either the Sin against the Holy Ghost, elsewhere mentioned, or any total Defection from the Faith and Profession of Christianity, is evident from that Passage, 1 *John* v. 16, 17, 18. *If any Man see* HIS BROTHER *sin a Sin that is not unto Death, let him ask, and he shall give him Life for a Sin which is not unto Death. There is a Sin unto Death; I say not that thou shouldst pray for it. All* UNRIGHTEOUSNESS *is* SIN; *but there is a Sin not unto Death. We know that he that is born of God, sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself* PURE, *and the wicked* ONE *toucheth him not.* Now it is plain here, that the Sin unto Death, or the Sin which was not to be pray'd for, and which could not be forgiven upon Repentance, could not be the Sin against the *Holy Ghost*, which consisted in Mens ascribing the Miracles and mighty Works of Christ and the Apostles to the Power and Influence of the Devil. This being resisting the strongest and clearest Evidence, was unpardonable because it was incurable, and they who could not be convinced

vinced by ſuch Evidence, were ſuppoſed to be abſolutely unconvincible, and ſuch as could never be brought to the Belief and Practice of Chriſtianity at all. Nor could this *Sin unto Death*, which was not to be pray'd for, or could not be pardoned, even upon Repentance, ſignify or imply a total Apoſtaſy from the Faith of Chriſt, or Profeſſion of the Goſpel; ſince it is expreſſly ſaid to be the Sin of a *Brother*, or Fellow-Profeſſor of Chriſt, which an Apoſtate who had openly renounced Chriſt could not be. Upon the Whole, therefore, I think, it is plain, that Sin unto Death, this ſinning wilfully after Men had receiv'd the Knowledge of the Truth, or falling away after Baptiſm and Converſion, muſt ſignify any wilful preſumptuous Sin, or Courſe of Sinning, under the Goſpel, in Violation of a Man's open Profeſſion and Covenant-Engagement to the Chriſtian Faith and Practice. To put any other Senſe or Meaning to theſe Texts, would be, in Effect, to make them ſignify nothing at all, or any Thing at Pleaſure, as is evident from the many unnatural, forced, and conſtrained Conſtructions which our Divines or Expoſitors have put upon them; who by trumping their own Senſe, and modern Syſtems upon Scripture, have in Conſequence diſtinguiſh'd it away, and inſtead of explaining it to the Ignorant, expoſed it to the Learned.

But,

But, it must not be concluded from hence, that Repentance could be of no Avail for any wilful, presumptuous Sins committed under the Gospel, or after Men had been converted, baptized, and taken upon them the Christian Covenant. For tho' the general Act of Grace, or Indemnity, publish'd to the whole World, both *Jew* and *Gentile*, at the first Preaching of the Gospel, extended only to all Sins committed in that prior, natural State of Darkness, or under that Ignorance which God *winked at*, and could not be extended farther to any wilful, presumptuous Sins committed afterwards under the clear Light of the Gospel, and against Mens Christian, open Profession and Covenant; yet Repentance must have always this good Effect to lessen the Number of Mens Sins, and increase the Weight and Value of their good Actions in the Day of Account, when *every Man shall be judged according to his Works, or according to the Deeds done in the Body, whether they have been good or evil*; and when Men in Consequence shall be rewarded or punished upon the Balance of the whole Account, in Proportion to their good and evil Actions, as one or the other shall be found to have prevailed in the Course of their Lives, or while they had acted in the Body. This is a common Principle of Nature and Reason, and the true Ground of all judiciary Adjustment of Accounts; and therefore, no peculiar Favour, or Act of Grace granted

granted to the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* World upon their firſt Converſion, and taking upon them the Faith and Profeſſion of the Goſpel, could ever be judged to ſet aſide this Doctrine, ſo plainly founded both in Reaſon and Scripture. But let us now ſuppoſe the contrary Doctrine to be true, and that what I have here advanced cannot be proved from Scripture, or fairly ſupported upon the Chriſtian Principles; and let us try the Conſequences of ſuch a Suppoſition: And it is evident, that upon this Suppoſition no Scheme of Religion could ever have been contrived for a greater Encouragement to Sin, or for the Juſtification of the moſt wilful, preſumptuous Sinners after the longeſt Courſe of a wicked Life, and when Men had done all the poſſible Miſchief they could do in the World. For, after all this, a late Repentance towards the Cloſe of a long, wicked Life, ſhall wipe out the whole Score, ſo that no former Sins ſhall be ever mentioned, or put to a Man's Account in the Day of Judgment. And, for the ſame Reaſon, all the good Actions of a long, ſerviceable Life ſhall be ſet aſide, and cancelled in the Day of Accounts, if a Man ſhould happen to turn off, and do Evil in the laſt Period of his Life, tho' not for an hundredth Part of the Time that he had been doing good in. But this certainly would not be judging Men according to their Works, or according to the Deeds

Deeds done in the Body, but only according to their laſt Actions, or that Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind, which upon ſome Accident or other they might happen to die in. But, upon this Suppoſition, there could not be a greater Encouragement to Sin and Wickedneſs, or a greater Diſcouragement to Righteouſneſs and Virtue, than the Chriſtian Doctrines of Repentance, Pardon, and the judicial Proceeding of the laſt Day. I have ſaid thus much upon this Subject, in order to ſhew, that our Chriſtian Divines, for at leaſt fourteen hundred Years paſt, have generally miſtaken theſe important Doctrines of Chriſtianity, and preach'd not Chriſt, but another Goſpel, to the unſpeakable Detriment of the Chriſtian World, and of Mankind in general. And while they continue to do this, and neither to ſtudy the Scriptures, nor the Reaſon of Things, but to form Creeds and Syſtems of Chriſtianity out of their own Heads, accommodated to their Prejudices and Intereſts, it will be a vain Thing for them to cry out and complain of the Growth of *Deiſm*, by which they mean nothing elſe but *Opinions contrary to their* OWN, and not ſufficiently calculated to the Meridian of Wealth and Power in the Church. But,

3dly, As the Death of Chriſt was neceſſary, or at leaſt expedient, fit and reaſonable to evince and exemplify the abſolute Authority of God, and the indiſpenſable Obli-

gation to Obedience in the moſt difficult Inſtances of it; ſo we have hereby the moſt encouraging Example ſet before us, to convince us that the Thing is poſſible and practicable, and that we ſhall not fail, in caſe of Need, to be aſſiſted in it, and ſupported under it, as Chriſt himſelf was. This is a mighty Conſolation to Perſons under Affliction, or to ſuch as may be called by Providence to ſuffer in the Defence of any important Truth in the Cauſe of Virtue and Religion, and for the common Intereſt of Mankind. And this is making a much better Uſe of the Death of Chriſt, than pleading the Merit of it in Exemption from the Obedience which God requires of us, or to render that Obedience available, which God had made ſo before by the moſt expreſs Declaration, and which is really ſo in the Nature and Reaſon of the Thing. If this were not obſerv'd and kept to, Chriſtians might be ſaved upon much eaſier Terms than others, and might be the greateſt Sinners with all the Privileges and Immunities of the greateſt Saints. But,

4thly and laſtly, To put an End to this long Head of Diſcourſe, Chriſt, therefore, ſubmitted to the painful and ignominious Death of the Croſs, under all the ſhocking and grievous Circumſtances of it, that he might hereby exemplify and recommend in the moſt effectual Manner to the World, the great

great Advantages and plain Neceſſity of an abſolute Truſt in, and Dependence upon God, with the Efficacy and Effect of Prayer, and the Wiſdom and Importance of ſuch a Truſt in, and Dependence on God for another Life, whatever our State or Circumſtances may be in this. This is a very natural and eaſy Notion, and muſt needs afford Matter of great Conſolation to every good Chriſtian. And, I cannot ſee any Objection it is liable to, unleſs it is with ſuch as will not allow Prayer, and Truſt in, or Dependence upon God, as the wiſe and righteous Governor of the World, to be of any Efficacy, or Avail at all to Creatures under moral Government. Some ſuch, I know, there are, who look upon themſelves to be great Philoſophers, and very wiſe Men; and therefore, perhaps, it may not be amiſs to conſider the Strength, or rather the Weakneſs of their Cauſe.

" God, ſay they, being infinitely wiſe, " and knowing all Things, muſt have fore- " ſeen, from all Eternity, every Thing that " could happen, as well in the moral as " natural World, and all the Incidents and " Emergencies that might ariſe in one, as " much as in the other. Therefore in " the one, as well as in the other, when " he laid the general Scheme, he muſt " have eſtabliſh'd certain general Laws; for " being infinitely wiſe, and knowing all

" Things, and at the ſame Time omnipo-
" tent, he might as well provide for the In-
" cidents and Emergencies, or for all poſſi-
" ble Events in the one as in the other.
" Therefore God, in both Caſes, when he
" laid the general Scheme, muſt have fixed
" and ſettled ſuch general Laws which ſhould
" take Place in all particular Incidents and
" emerging Occaſions, ſo as not to need any
" occaſional, conſtant Interpoſition to mend
" the original Work, or ſupply the Defects
" of ſuch general Laws. This, ſay they,
" muſt certainly argue Weakneſs and Want
" of Foreſight, or ſome Flaw in the original
" Deſign. It will be allow'd, with Regard
" to the natural World, that God governs it
" by general Laws, ſuch as are ſufficient to
" direct the Whole thro' all the Periods of
" its Exiſtence, and not to oblige him to
" conſtant Attendance and Interpoſition, ei-
" ther to make new Laws, or ſuſpend the
" old, upon every Accident, or particular
" Emergency, which not being foreſeen,
" could not be provided for. And the ſame
" Reaſon holds good, with reſpect to the in-
" tellectual, intelligent, or moral World,
" which muſt equally be governed by ge-
" neral Laws, ſuch as may ever take Place,
" and be ſufficient to anſwer all particular
" Emergencies and Incidents of Action. It
" is our Duty, therefore, to acquieſce and
" reſt ſatisfied with whatever happens, and

" not

" not to wiſh or deſire that any Thing ſhould
" be otherwiſe; ſince whatever is ordered
" and directed by the ſupream Being, *i. e.*
" all Events univerſally, muſt be beſt upon
" the Whole; at leaſt we ſhould not expect
" that he ſhould alter his Meaſures as often
" as we may be out of Humour with Af-
" fairs, or think fit to remonſtrate and ſend
" up our Petitions to the Governor of the
" World for a Redreſs of Grievances. To
" what Purpoſe then ſhould you pray, or
" deſire the Prayers of others? If God does
" not govern the World right, you ſhould
" plainly tell him ſo, and put Things into a
" better Courſe and Order if you can. There
" are no People in the World ſo diſcontented,
" and ſo apt to be out of Temper upon every
" Trifle, as theſe praying People. They can
" correct even their Creator, find out Flaws
" in God's Providence and Government, and
" ſee every one's Faults but their own. In
" ſhort, God himſelf cannot pleaſe theſe
" Saints, and nothing comes to paſs as it
" ought to do, tho' yet, as they own, the ſu-
" pream Governor is continually interpoſing
" by a particular Providence in their Favour.
" Beſides, it is evident, from the Nature and
" Reaſon of Things, that there can be no
" particular interpoſing Providence grounded
" upon the free Actions of Men, ſince there
" can be no ſuch Thing as free Actions;
" but all intelligent Beings muſt neceſſarily,

" at all Times, and upon all Occaſions, " think and act as they do, without any " Freedom of Choice, or any Power or Li- " berty of doing otherwiſe at the ſame Time, " and under the ſame Circumſtances of Ac- " tion. For, it is plain, that the Will ne- " ceſſarily follows the ultimate, practical " Judgment of the Underſtanding, concern- " ing natural Good and Evil, Happineſs and " Miſery; and no Man can deſire, will and " chuſe Pain or Miſery as ſuch, or reject " and nill Pleaſure and Happineſs upon the " Whole as Things ſhall appear to him. But " this practical Judgment, concerning Good " and Evil, is neceſſarily founded upon a " Man's Ideas, Perceptions, and the Appear- " ances of Things to his own Mind; which " Ideas, ſince they are ſuch as are excited " in, and impreſs'd upon the Mind from the " Objects themſelves, from the neceſſary Con- " ſtitution of Nature, and no Man can cre- " ate them, or alter them from what they " really are, in the Nature of Objects them- " ſelves, by a prior Neceſſity, which can- " not depend upon his Will or Choice: Here " therefore the whole Train of Thinking and " Acting muſt be neceſſary, from firſt to laſt. " The ſimple Idea or Perception is neceſſi- " tated by Objects, the Judgment by the " Perception, and the Volition or Action by " the Judgment: And all this by an in- " telligent Power acting upon the Mind, as

" much

" much as one Body communicates Motion " to another, by a natural, mechanical Force. " And, to ſay, that Will or Choice cannot " be really Will or Choice, or that it can- " not be acting at all, unleſs it is free, not " only from external Violence, Compulſion, " or Coaction, but even from this internal " Principle of Reaſon, or Motives, as ap- " pearing to the Mind, is to beg the Queſ- " tion, and to aſſert a Thing that can neither " be underſtood nor proved."

I have thus far argued in the Perſon of one of theſe modern Sophiſts, and ſo far as I know have fairly repreſented the whole Strength of the Cauſe. But the foregoing Piece of Reaſon and Ridicule contains ſuch a Mixture of Truth and Falſhood, that the ſeveral Members of it cannot be diſtinctly view'd, till they are taken abroad, and conſidered apart; and when this is done, it will be found, that a weaker Compages of Diſcourſe could hardly have been put together with any plauſible Appearances or Grounds of Probability. I grant, therefore, that God governs both the natural and moral World by ſtated general Laws, and that he does not alter, ſet aſide, or ſuſpend theſe Laws upon particular Incidents, or occaſional Emergencies. And it muſt likewiſe be granted, that the Prayers and Addreſſes which are often ſent up to him, as the ſupream Governor of the World, are nothing elſe but the private

Uneaſineſſes and perſonal Diſcontents of the Suppliants, who might, perhaps, be as much diſpleaſed with any Thing elſe, and know not what they would have themſelves, or what would content them. Here, therefore, it would be as unfit or unreaſonable for God to regard ſuch Prayers and Addreſſes, as it would be for him, in all other Caſes, to depart from, or give up his general Principles of Action, and Laws of Government, only to gratify the peeviſh Humours, or miſtaken Intereſts of weak and ill-natured Creatures.

But here, perhaps, it may be ſaid, that by theſe Conceſſions, I have given up the whole Point: For, if God governs both the natural and moral World by ſtated general Laws, not to be altered or ſuſpended upon particular Occaſions, or ariſing Incidents, it muſt then follow, that there can be no Room at all, or Reaſon to be aſſign'd for any particular, occaſional Interpoſition, or for any conſtant, continued Power, Preſence, or Action of God in the Government, either of the natural or moral World. But, whatever ſuch a Philoſopher may imagine, the true State of the Queſtion here, is not whether God governs both the natural and moral World by ſtated, general Laws; but whether he governs the World at all or not? Or, whether he has not made a World under ſuch general Laws, or ſuch natural, inherent Properties and Powers of moving and acting, as

to

to be able, for ever after, to govern and support itself, without any farther Presence, Influence, or Operation of God upon it? And this is a Point of too great Consequence to be pass'd over without farther Inquiry. For I must say it again, that the Question here, is not whether God governs the World by general Laws, but whether the World does not support and govern itself by certain inherent, essential Powers and Properties in the Things themselves? And this, in Truth and Reality, is the Question between Deists and Atheists, and not between Christians and Deists, as has been always foolishly and most absurdly supposed. The Christian *Jews*, or *Jewish* Christians; namely, they who have laboured to found Christianity upon Judaism, have always had two Sorts of Adversaries, who have proved very dangerous to them, *i. e.* the real Deists upon the Christian Scheme, and the real Atheists, who are in no Scheme of Religion at all. And by confounding these two essentially different Principles and Characters, they have weakly betrayed, exposed, and even utterly subverted their own Cause.

But to return to the main Point in Hand; since the natural and moral World, or Parts of the Creation, are essentially distinct, and must consequently, if they are governed at all, be governed by Laws which are essentially distinct and different from each other, it will be proper to consider them apart, by which

which you will have a clearer and more distinct View of the whole Matter. It is plain then, that as the material World, or System of Bodies, is void of all Thought, Intelligence, Design, or free Agency, it must be governed and directed by the Laws of necessary, and mechanical Force, independent of all Intelligence, Will, or Choice in the Subject thus governed and directed. But on the other Hand, as the moral World consists of Subjects capable of Intelligence, Will, and Choice, they must be governed by the Laws of intelligent Action, Will, or Choice: For it is plainly, as impossible to govern the moral World by the Laws of necessary, extrinsick Force, as it would be to govern the natural World, or System of Bodies, by the Laws of intelligent Self-Motion. Now all this being too plain to be deny'd, let us see whether the necessary Consequence of it will not be, that God governs the natural and moral World, by his constant, uninterrupted Presence, Power, and incessant Action upon both, and not by any such essential, inherent Powers or Properties in the Things themselves, as might set aside the continued Presence, Power, and Agency of God as unnecessary, or as having nothing to do in the Government of either the natural or moral World. It is supposed, therefore, in this Scheme, that the natural World, or System of Bodies, having been once created, dispos'd into

into their proper Order, and indued with certain Powers, Properties, and general Laws of Motion, muſt afterwards continue to exiſt and move on upon ſuch general Powers, Properties, or Laws, without any farther Preſence, Power, or Operation of the *firſt Cauſe*. But if theſe natural, inherent and eſſential Principles, Properties, or general Laws, can ſuſtain and govern the World without God, or without the continued Agency of the firſt Cauſe; I would fain know why they might not have created the World at firſt, or why they may not be as well ſuppoſed to have been eternal, neceſſary, and independent of any Cauſe at all. If this material World, or Syſtem of Bodies, be ſuppoſed capable of continuing in Exiſtence, and perſevering in its own Motions, upon its own Laws and eſſential Powers and Properties, but for one Moment, without the neceſſary Preſence, Power, and Operation of God upon it, the ſame might as well be ſuppoſed for any longer Time; and ſo, *in Infinitum*, forward and backward, from Eternity and to Eternity. And this being once ſuppos'd, to ſay afterwards, that ſuch a Syſtem muſt require the Power and Agency of God to give it Exiſtence, to indue it with thoſe general Laws and eſſential Properties, and to put it into Operation at firſt, would be a needleſs and a groundleſs Aſſertion, a Thing for which, upon this Hypotheſis, there could be

no

no Neceſſity, and for which no Reaſon can be aſſign'd. Preſervation therefore, or the Support and Continuation of Exiſtence and Motion, is as neceſſary an Effect of God's Preſence, Power, and Action, as Creation itſelf; and to ſay otherwiſe, would be to aſſert and maintain a Thing without the leaſt Reaſon or Poſſibility of Proof. Now when theſe Gentlemen had diſcharged God from the Government of the natural World, and ſuppoſed that the Syſtem of Bodies once put into Exiſtence and Motion, was ſufficient in itſelf to continue in that Exiſtence, and to perſevere in thoſe Motions, without any farther Occaſion or Neceſſity of the divine Preſence and continued Energy upon it; it was after this very natural to relieve God from the moral Part of Government, and to reject the Doctrine of his Providence, as an unphiloſophical Thing. I muſt own, indeed, that many great and celebrated Philoſophers, who have run into the former Abſurdity, have yet moſt religiouſly adhered to the Doctrine of Providence and moral Government. But then it muſt be ſaid at the ſame Time, that they had given too much Ground and Encouragement for others to come after them, and complete a Scheme which they had only begun and left imperfect. This has been the Caſe in Fact, and it is not at all ſurprizing that the *moral Atheiſt* ſhould ariſe out of the *natural one*, and conſtitute a Creature all of

a

a Piece. Thus when Men will be learned beyond the Meaſures of Sobriety, they muſt run into Schemes and Methods of philoſophizing equally abſurd and irreligious. For God, according to theſe Philoſophers, makes and governs a natural World that is capable of governing itſelf, and that might have made itſelf as well, had they not paſs'd a needleſs and inſignificant Compliment upon the Creator. But I hope they will mend their Scheme, and compound this Matter for their own Honour, and not pretend to ſay, that God has made a neceſſary World, or a ſelf-exiſtent Syſtem of Creatures. Yet this is the philoſophical Scheme of Atheiſm, which its Patrons would fain call Deiſm, and in which the Chriſtian *Jews* or *Jewiſh* Chriſtians aſſiſt them, by joining inadvertently in the ſame Cry. But if this be not a fine Scheme of Philoſophy, let Chriſtian Deiſm ſtand for an odd Sort of Religion, and let the Chriſtian *Jews* be for ever orthodox, and be allow'd as the only religious Men in the World. It is certain, that if God governs moral Agents at all, he muſt govern them by Hope and Fear, or by ſuch a wiſe and ſuitable Application of Rewards and Puniſhments, as the different Circumſtances of Perſons, and the Ends of Government require. And theſe Rewards and Puniſhments muſt be ſuch as are not the natural, neceſſary Conſequences of the Actions themſelves,

themſelves, ſince every one muſt ſee that this would be no Government at all, and that the Caſe, in this Reſpect, muſt be the very ſame whether we ſuppoſe any rectoral Juſtice, or any Preſence or Operation of God in the World or not. And yet this which is really no Government at all, is all the general Providence which ſome ſeem willing to allow. But ſince thoſe Gentlemen are all deep Philoſophers, and above the groſs Ignorance of the common Herd, I would here only aſk them, What are the Laws of Nature? What is the Law of Gravity, the Law of communicating Motion from one Body to another by Impulſe, and the Law of the *Vis Inertiæ* of Bodies? Are theſe natural, eſſential and inherent Properties of the Bodies themſelves, or are they the regular Effects of ſome univerſal, extrinſick Cauſe acting inceſſantly upon the whole material Syſtem, by ſuch and ſuch general Laws and Conditions of Agency? As ſoon as theſe Philoſophers have anſwered this and ſuch like Queſtions, they will change their Principles, and mend their Syſtems; and till they have done this, one may venture to leave them where they are. But it ſeems, the main Strength of this Cauſe lies in the Fataliſm and Neceſſity of all Actions, whether they are divine or human, of God or Man. " For, " ſince every intelligent Being muſt neceſ- " ſarily think and judge, as Things neceſ- " ſarily

" ſarily appear to his Mind or Underſtand-
" ing, and neceſſarily act as he thinks or
" judges concerning natural Good or Evil,
" Happineſs or Miſery, it muſt from hence
" plainly follow, that no Action can be
" free; *and therefore every Thing that can be*
" *either thought or done, muſt be equally right,*
" *or equally wrong; or, which is the ſame*
" *Thing, nothing can be either right, or*
" *wrong.*" But who told theſe Gentlemen this, or who made them ſo wiſe? Not God, I am ſure; for they ſcorn any Communications from him. And therefore they do not neceſſarily think and act as they do from the Nature and Reaſon of Things. But if they are not wiſer, they cannot help it, and they would certainly do better if they could; and conſequently, it muſt be contrary to the Nature and Reaſon of Things, either to reward or puniſh them, or to take any Notice of them at all. And as this is the neceſſary Conſequence of their own Scheme, I think it to be an innocent, harmleſs Conſequence enough, and ſhould have taken them upon their own Terms, if they had never ſet up for Philoſophers and wiſe Men. But as they would claim upon their own Principles, Merit againſt Merit, and Praiſe where they confeſs none can be due, I muſt beg Leave to debate the Matter a little farther with them.

" The Mind of Man, ſay they, allowing
" for Intelligence and conſcious Action, is

" governed upon the ſame Principles and " Laws with Matter. A Body impreſſed " by two contrary equal Forces, as a Ba- " lance by equal Weights, muſt neceſſarily " reſt *in Equilibrio*, and cannot move at all, " either this Way or that. But Reaſons and " Motives of Action have the ſame Force " and Operation upon the Mind, and there- " fore the Mind under contrary equal Rea- " ſons and Motives of Action muſt remain " quieſcent and not act at all."

Let us here then ſuppoſe the Reaſons and Motives of Action to be equal on both Sides, when a Queſtion is propoſed to and debated in the Mind, whether a Man ſhall ſpeak or be ſilent, ſtay or go, ſit or ſtand, where either of them muſt be free voluntary Actions, and depend equally upon the Will or Power of Self-Determination; and in this Caſe, upon the preſent Hypotheſis, where all the Reaſons and Motives of Action are equal on both Sides, a Man could neither ſpeak nor be ſilent, ſit nor ſtand, ſtay where he is nor go away; though, at the ſame Time, he muſt neceſſarily do one of them, and both would be equally acting, or a Self-Determination under the Command of the Will. The Suppoſition therefore that the Mind, in this Caſe, would be in the State of a Balance, or of a Body impreſſed by two contrary equal Forces that muſt abſolutely reſt, and could neither move this Way or that, is falſe, abſurd,

and

and plainly contradictory. But here it will be ſaid, that ſuch an Action could be of no Conſequence or moral Conſideration at all, ſince it would be perfectly indifferent upon this Suppoſition, whether a Man ſhould act or not act, *i. e.* perform or forbear an Action thus propoſed to the Mind. Which is true; but then it demonſtrates the Power of Self-Motion or Self-Determination independent of all Reaſons, Motives, or Excitements to Action *ab extra*, which is all I would prove by it.

But let us now ſuppoſe an Action to be moral, and of the utmoſt Conſequence, with reſpect to Pleaſure or Pain, Happineſs or Miſery. And I ſay, *That no wrong Judgment or Practice in this Caſe can be neceſſary; or that no Error, either in Judgment or Practice can be invincible from any Perception of Ideas, or Relation of Ideas in the Mind.* The whole Fallacy here, lies in confounding *Perception* with *Judgment*, *Opinion*, or *Belief*. PERCEPTION is the immediate Self-Conſciouſneſs of Ideas in the Mind, or of the natural Relation of one or more Ideas as exiſting in, and appearing to the Underſtanding. Perception therefore is as neceſſary as the ſimple Ideas excited in the Mind, or the neceſſary, natural Relation of thoſe Ideas, which cannot be altered or made otherwiſe by any Power of Will or Choice. But Judgment, Opinion, or Belief is a quite different Thing; for this is an Act

of the Mind, by which it joins or ſeparates Ideas in mental or verbal Propoſitions. And this joining and ſeparating Ideas in mental or verbal Propoſitions, or in Judgments, Opinions and Beliefs, may be either agreeable to their real Exiſtence and natural Relations in the Mind, or contrary to all ſuch natural Relation, real Exiſtence and Appearance of Ideas to the Underſtanding, or ſuch as cannot poſſibly exiſt, appear, or be perceived there. In one Caſe the Judgment is right, or agreeable to the real Exiſtence and natural Relation of Ideas in the Mind: In the other Caſe, the Judgment as expreſs'd in the Propoſition is wrong, and the Ideas under ſuch Relation as expreſs'd in the Propoſition, cannot poſſibly appear to or exiſt in the Mind, or any Ways be perceiv'd there. Whatever is properly natural and neceſſary, is for that Reaſon right and cannot be wrong, otherwiſe than as Nature itſelf is wrong, and founded upon Principles of Deception. And therefore no body ever talks of wrong ſimple Ideas, wrong Perceptions, or wrong natural Relations of Ideas, as exiſting in the Mind, and really appearing to the Underſtanding. I aſſume it here as a Poſtulatum, or rather an Axiom, that what is not really in the Mind, cannot appear there, and that no Man can perceive any natural Relation of Ideas where he has really no ſuch Ideas, or where thoſe Ideas have

no

no ſuch Relation one to another. If the Judgment or Opinion formed into Propoſitions, went no farther than the Perception, or real Exiſtence or Relation of the Ideas themſelves, as appearing to the Underſtanding, any ſuch Judgment or Opinion muſt be as neceſſarily true and right, as the real Exiſtence and natural Relations of thoſe Ideas and Perceptions in the Mind, and no Man can form a wrong Judgment, but by putting ſomething in the Concluſion, that was not in the Premiſes; and then affirming that he ſees what he does not, and cannot poſſibly ſee. A Man, in this Caſe, ſees and perceives that Truth is Falſhood, and Falſhood Truth, that Light is Darkneſs, and Darkneſs Light, and that there is really no ſuch Thing as Truth and Falſhood, no Difference between them, or no Power in the Mind of perceiving and diſtinguiſhing them one from the other. But the Fallacy of this whole Scheme lies in confounding Perceptions, Ideas, and the natural Relations of Ideas as they neceſſarily exiſt in the Mind, and make their Appearance to the Underſtanding, with Mens Reaſonings, Judgments, and Opinions about them, as expreſs'd in Propoſitions, and ſuppoſing the latter to be neceſſarily connected with, and founded in the former. But this is abſolutely falſe and impoſſible; and he who would maintain it, muſt aſſert, that there

is no ſuch Thing as Truth different from Error and Falſhood, or no Power in the Mind of perceiving and diſtinguiſhing them, or that Error and Falſhood are founded upon the ſame natural neceſſary Principles with Truth itſelf.

A Man makes a wrong Judgment, and precipitates himſelf into ſome practical, hurtful Error, and when he is convicted of it, or comes to ſee the Evil in its Conſequences, he pleads in his own Excuſe, that he really thought it to be true, and that it appeared ſo to his Underſtanding. Now that he really *thought ſo*, that is, that he really made a *wrong Judgment*, and conſequently, muſt act wrong, the Judgment being ſuppoſed, is very true; but that the Thing really appear'd ſo to his Underſtanding, or that this wrong Judgment was founded in, and neceſſarily connected with any Ideas or natural Relations of Ideas actually preſent to his Mind, and perceiv'd there, is falſe and impoſſible, for the Reaſons already aſſign'd. I readily grant, that the moral Act flows from, or is neceſſarily connected with the practical Judgment concerning the natural Good or Evil of Actions. But if this practical Judgment be not the very imperate Act of the Will itſelf, it is at leaſt ſo intimately related to, and conjoin'd with it, that I believe any Man, by Reflection on himſelf, and the Operations of his own Mind, will find

find it very difficult to ſeparate or diſtinguiſh them one from the other. To ſay, therefore, that the *Will* neceſſarily follows the *practical Judgment*, is only, in Effect, ſaying that the Will, which Way ſoever it determines, neceſſarily ſuppoſes the Will under that Determination, or that a Man cannot will and nill, chuſe and refuſe the ſame Thing at the ſame Time. Which is doubtleſs true, but nothing at all to the Purpoſe, and can ſerve only to turn the Argument into Jeſt and Ridicule. And yet this groſs Darkneſs and Confuſion of ſimple Ideas and Perceptions, with practical Judgment and moral Action, is the great Strength of Fataliſm, and the clearer Light of intelligent Machines.

I have been the larger upon this, as being a Matter of ſuch infinite Conſequence to Mankind. For in this Liableneſs to but Non-invincibility of Error conſiſts probational Liberty, or the Liberty of a Creature in a State of Trial, in Conſequence of the good or ill Uſe of which Men will be accountable for their Actions, and be accordingly rewarded or puniſhed by the wiſe and righteous Governor and Judge of the World; and I have treated this Subject in a philoſophical Way, as knowing that I could have no Adverſaries here, but ſuch as are Men of ſome Parts and Subtilty in Speculation. And for this Reaſon I have contracted the Argument

into as narrow a Compaſs as I could, that if any one ſhould think fit to anſwer me, he need not be at much Pains about it.

And now I can give you the Comfort to let you know, that I am come to the Application, and ſhall not detain you upon this Subject above an Hour longer; or only while I can draw a Corollary or Scholium or two from what has been ſaid, which in this ſermonizing Way, I muſt call practical Obſervations, Reflections, or Inferences.

Firſt then, from hence we may ſee, that there is a certain infallible Criterion, whereby to diſtinguiſh between Superſtition and Religion, or which is the ſame Thing, between true and falſe Religion. And that is the great Rule of Judgment, which God will proceed upon with all Mankind in the laſt Days, when he will Reward or puniſh Men according to the Deeds done in the Body, or as their Actions have been agreeable or diſagreeable to the eternal, immutable Law or Rule of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs. All Doctrines which neceſſarily ſuppoſe, or imply this Principle, are true, original, Chriſtian Doctrines. But all Doctrines and prevailing Opinions which ſuppoſe and imply the contrary; as that God, in the Day of Retribution, will reward or puniſh Men for the Actions of others, which are not their own proper perſonal Actions, ſuch as the authoritative Action

tion of the Prieſt in ſaleable Pardons, Indulgencies, Abſolutions upon a Death-Bed, *&c.* or by the redundant Merits and Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, which is always a Fund of Property in the Prieſt's Hands to be diſpoſed of, as he ſhall direct; I ſay, all ſuch Doctrines and Principles of Practice, are certainly the corrupt Dregs of Judaiſm, and as ſuch to be rejected and condemn'd by whatſoever Weight of Authority, or Prevalency of Cuſtom they may have been receiv'd and adher'd to. This is the firſt and great Principle of Chriſtianity, and of all true Religion; as the Chriſtian Deiſts will certainly be able to prove againſt all the Efforts and Struggles of the Chriſtian *Jews*. I am ſure that this is the Scheme which muſt ſupport the Authority of God, and keep up the Awe and Influence of his governing Juſtice, and moral Perfections, in the World. And yet it is more than poſſible, that ſome Men will endeavour to ſpiritualize their private Intereſts, and repreſent me as a moſt wicked, ungodly Wretch, for ſetting aſide any Doctrines that are very profitable to them. We always ſee, that no commonly-receiv'd Tenets in Religion can be openly attack'd; but the *Epheſian* Silver-Smiths or Crafts-Men, who claim a Property in theſe Opinions, are preſently in an Uproar: And when their Paſſions are thus raiſed and warmed, they will run together in Tumults, crying out,

O Revelation! O divine Religion! O ſweet, ineſtimable, precious Gain! Or which is the ſame Thing, Great is *Diana* of the *Epheſians*, whom all *Aſia* and the World worſhip. But, I hope to do even theſe Crafts-Men more Juſtice than ever they have done the reſt of the World. And therefore, in my Opinion, Chriſtianity, both in its Doctrines, and Miniſtry or Method of propagating them, muſt certainly appear to be a very conſiſtent, rational Scheme, and a moſt wiſe and excellent Conſtitution, when it is once clear'd from thoſe Dregs of Judaiſin, which have been retained in, and mixed with it. But when this is done, there will be nothing left that can be of any Advantage to the political, hierarchical Clergy, but a *good Life*, or the univerſal Practice of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs. And this I am ſure muſt give ſome of them very gloomy Apprehenſions, and they cannot, upon ſuch Occaſions, forbear diſcovering the Conſternation they are under. But to conclude this Head of Diſcourſe, I take it as certain, that every Doctrine which ſuppoſes the abſolute Neceſſity of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs, and of nothing elſe, in order to Happineſs, is from God, and bears the Stamp of divine Authority. But any Doctrine which will not ſtand this Teſt, can be no Part of true Religion, or real Chriſtianity, but muſt owe its Original and Credit

Credit to the Policy and Artifice of ſome, and the Ignorance and Superſtition of others.

2dly, From hence we may ſee, how we are to underſtand, that common Diſtinction between the Religion of the *End*, and the Religion of the *Means:* A Diſtinction which tho' always made, is, perhaps, ſeldom underſtood. Now it is, I think, very plain, or, at leaſt, I ſhall venture here to take it as a Poſtulatum, that all Means of God's Appointment muſt have a natural Relation to, and Connexion with the End, and be neceſſary in the Reaſon, Fitneſs, and mutual Dependency of Things, to obtain ſuch an End; or otherwiſe, it would be no Means at all, or no ſpecial, neceſſary Means of divine Appointment, which is the ſame Thing. And to ſuppoſe, that God would inſtitute ſpecial Means, which have no ſpecial Relation to the End, or any rational Connexion with it, is to ſuppoſe him an arbitrary Being, and that his Laws are not founded upon Reaſon, Wiſdom, or moral Fitneſs, but upon mere abſolute Will and Pleaſure.

But this, as plain as it ſeems, will doubtleſs be diſputed, even by Proteſtants, and the external, ritual Part of the two Sacraments, as they are call'd, will be urged to the contrary. I think, no Man can pretend to ſay, that there is any rational Connexion either natural or moral, between theſe external Rituals,

tuals, and any internal Virtue or true Religion, either in Act or Habit. Who will say, that washing the Body with Water can be any natural, rational Means of purifying the Soul, or purging the Conscience from Sin and dead Works, or that the elementary Part of the Eucharist can have any such Tendency to convey Grace, to strengthen the inward Habit of Virtue, or to seal and confirm to Men the great Blessings and Rewards of Christianity?

But, I must beg your Patience a little longer, *Theophanes*, tho' I have just done. I know you are ready to say, that since Christ hath plainly instituted the Baptism of Water, and the elementary Commemoration of his Death and Sufferings in the Eucharist, for any one after this to suppose or maintain, that Christ will not bless his own Institutions, or that he hath instituted needless or ineffectual Means, is plainly to impeach his Wisdom, and renounce his Authority, or which is the same Thing, it is declaring against Christianity itself. Now this Objection, I must own, would be very strong, and even unanswerable, upon Christian Principles, was it founded upon a right Supposition. But the quite contrary here happens to be true, and if any Priest in *England* should affirm otherwise, I must demand his Proof. For, I say, that the external, elementary Parts of either of the Sacraments, were not instituted by

by Chriſt, and cannot, therefore, properly ſpeaking, be Chriſtian Inſtitutions. Both theſe Sacraments, *as we call them*, were in uſe before, as national Rites, Uſages, or Cuſtoms among the *Jews*. And here they were equally obſerv'd by all Men, or by the whole Nation good or bad, and were never annex'd to any moral Character. Nor did ever the Prieſts in this true Church of *Iſrael*, how corrupt ſoever they might otherwiſe be, pretend to purify the Soul, to convey the Grace of God, or to alter the moral Characters of them by theſe external Rituals and Ceremonies. But here the Chriſtian Prieſts infinitely outdo their archetypical Predeceſſors, and pretend to mechanical Means of eternal Life and Salvation which the *Jewiſh* Prieſts never underſtood.

I ſee you are very impatient, *Theophanes*; but pray here me out. Your Interpoſition would make this Diſcourſe the longer, which in all Conſcience hath been too long already. That the Baptiſmal Water therefore, and the elementary Bread and Wine, were in uſe before, as nationl Rituals, or Uſages among the *Jews*, I ſhall not attempt to prove, till any learned Chriſtian will deny it: And till this is deny'd, it muſt neceſſarily follow, that theſe were not Chriſtian Inſtitutions. It was the Manner of the great Prophet Jeſus, in all his moral Diſcourſes to the People, to ſpiritualize and apply to a religious Purpoſe, not only

only the national Cuſtoms of the *Jews*, but even the moſt common Occurrences of Life and Appearances of Nature. And thus he occaſionally calls on them to contemplate and conſider the Ravens, the Sparrows, the Lilies of the Field, the Graſs and Corn, the Winds, Rains, and Tempeſts, the Rocks and Sands, *&c.* From all which very uſeful Obſervations might be made, and Inſtructions drawn, for the moral Conduct of Life. The Cuſtom which had obtain'd among them, of baptizing their Proſelytes, as a Symbol of national Purity, and of handing about Biſket and a Cup of Wine after Supper, our Lord in like Manner ſanctify'd and apply'd to a religious Uſe; but without connecting them with perſonal Holineſs, or making them the Means of Grace, or Conditions of divine Favour, any otherwiſe than as all ſuch ſpiritual Applications and religious Uſes of Things natural and temporal might be. The Papiſts, therefore, had they thought fit, inſtead of ſeven might have made ſeventy Sacraments; nor can the Proteſtants have any Reaſon to confine them only to two, as elementary Means of conveying ſpiritual Grace. Extream Unction, or anointing the Sick with Oil, in order to their Recovery, is as much a divine Inſtitution and Command, as any Thing of like Nature can be, and has as good a Title to a ſtanding, ſacred Ordinance in the Church, as any other external Ritual,

or inſtituted Means. And yet no Proteſtant would allow, nor is it agreeable to the moral Reaſon and Fitneſs of Things to ſuppoſe, that this is neceſſary to God's hearing and anſwering Prayer for the Sick, or that Prayer would not be available without it. But where any ſuch Practice or Cuſtom hath taken Place, and prevail'd under a certain Signification, or to ſuch or ſuch a particular Purpoſe, in this Caſe the Obſervation of it will be adviſable in Point of Decency, as a Matter of Reputation, and to avoid Scandal in the Imputation of Singularity. Affected Singularity is every where, and at all Times diſreputable, as it is a natural Mark of Pride, Vain-glory, and a Contempt of others. And there can be no Doubt but our great and holy Prophet, had he liv'd now, would have comply'd with and continued all innocent Cuſtoms, whether natural or legal, and endeavour'd to apply them to a religious Purpoſe, as he did in his own Time and Nation. But to argue from hence, that ſuch national Cuſtoms and Uſages were divinely inſtituted, as neceſſary Means of Grace, would be very abſurd and ridiculous.

But, to prevent all Miſtakes, and ſet this Matter in a clearer Light, we ought here carefully to diſtinguiſh between the eternal, immutable, and the temporary, occaſional Laws of God and Nature. The great Rule of Rectitude, or the Law of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs in general, is of eternal, unchange-

unchangeable Force and Obligation to all rational, intelligent Beings alike, and cannot under any poſſible Circumſtances be diſpenſed with, or ſet aſide. But particular Actions, which are neceſſarily connected with this general Law, and make a Part of it at one Time, and upon ſuch or ſuch Suppoſitions, may not be, at another Time, upon other Suppoſitions, and under different Circumſtances. And from hence it neceſſarily follows, that ſuch occaſional Laws, tho' they are natural Laws, and binding as ſuch *pro hic & nunc*, yet they cannot be of eternal, immutable Obligation, but muſt be altered and varied from Time to Time, according to the occaſional and mutable Relations and Circumſtances of Perſons and Things.

Every Law, ſo far as it is binding, or while it continues in Force, muſt be founded in Nature and Reaſon, and there neither is, nor can be any other obligatory Law. For tho' the greateſt Iniquities, or groſſeſt Abſurdities may be eſtabliſh'd by Law, *i. e.* by *Force or Power*, yet this alone cannot make them right or reaſonable. And, therefore, to aſcribe any ſuch Laws to God, under what Pretence ſoever, is to renounce his Sovereignty, and to declare againſt the Righteouſneſs and Equity of his moral Government. And from hence it is plain, that no occaſional Laws can be of eternal, immutable Obligations, unleſs we could ſuppoſe the Situa-

Situation, Relations and Circumſtances of Men in Society unalterable. And from hence all wiſe States and Governments have ever found it neceſſary to abrogate and alter the old, or to re-enact new Laws, according to mutable and variable Relations and Circumſtances of Perſons in Society. And this will equally hold good, when applied to the Laws of God himſelf, as the Laws of Nature and Reaſon muſt be always his Laws, or agreeable to his Will. For what God would require at one Time, under ſuch particular Relations and Circumſtances, he would not require at another Time, under other Relations and quite different or contrary Circumſtances.

It could never, therefore, be the Will of God, that any national, civil Law, with regard to the Conduct of Men in Society, ſhould be unalterable, while the Circumſtances and Relations of Perſons and Things, and conſequently the Reaſons of Action are ſo very mutable, and continually changing. And from hence, it may be queſtioned, whether the *Moſaick*, political OEconomy, eſpecially the poſitive and ritual Part of it, as a Matter of divine Inſtitution, could be made of perpetual, immutable Obligation, under the infinitely different and mutable Circumſtances of that People in all their ſucceſſive Generations? This ſurely is not agreeable to the Method of God and Providence, in any other State or OEconomy; and ſuch a Conſtitution

muſt neceſſarily diſſolve and deſtroy any other Society and Government, as it did that. And the plain Reaſon of this national Deſtruction, was the Stiffneſs and Obſtinacy of the *Jews*, in adhering to the literal Senſe of the Law, which St. *Paul*, as I have prov'd, utterly renounces and diſclaims.

Theoph. You ſeem, by your long Pauſe, to have done preaching.

Philal. I have ſo, and if you can forgive me this long Sermon, I will faithfully promiſe you never to preach another.

Theoph. I ſhall pardon you upon no ſuch Terms. A Man cannot atone for doing an ill Thing, by promiſing never to do a better. If you have unluckily miſs'd the Truth in a long Predication now, you ought, however, to exerciſe the ſame Talent once more ſome other Time, and endeavour to mend it.

Philal. I never expect to mend any Thing in the preaching Way: But, however, I am content to ſubmit this Eſſay of that Kind, ſuch as it is, to your Correction.

Theoph. I muſt own it is an Original of the Kind, and think you have taken the right Way to have it heard out, by not ſuffering the Audience to be more in Number than the Preacher. But, ſince you ſubmit it to my Judgment, I muſt tell you freely, that I am not able to reconcile your main Doctrine to the Scripture Account of Chriſt's Death and Sufferings. It is very plain and undeniable, that God

God hath declared himſelf reconcileable in the Goſpel and offer'd eternal Life and Happineſs to Mankind, by or through Jeſus Chriſt, as a Sacrifice for Sin. But, how he ſhould be a Sacrifice for Sin, without any Atonement, Propitiation, or vicarious Subſtitution, I cannot perceive. Could this Matter be once clear'd up, the State of Religion in the Scripture Account of it, would be plain and intelligible enough: But till this is done, the Doctrine of the *New Teſtament* concerning Chriſt, muſt, in my Opinion, remain very much in the Dark. Now here, your denying the Sacrifices under the Law to have been propitiatory, atoning or vicarious, is ſo far from explaining the Matter, that it leaves St. *Paul*'s Doctrine of Chriſt the more obſcure and unaccountable. For, to what Purpoſe doth St. *Paul* every where repreſent and ſpeak of the Death of Chriſt as a Sacrifice for Sin, if it was not really ſo, or what could ſuch figurative Expreſſions ſignify, but to puzzle and perplex the Chriſtian World, as if they had been deſign'd on Purpoſe to cloud and darken the Scriptures?

Philal. You urge the Objection home, and have offer'd, in ſhort, the Sum of all that is commonly ſaid in favour of the vicarious, ſacrificial Scheme; but, I think, this Objection and Way of Reaſoning had been ſufficiently obviated before, had you taken Notice of it, or attended to it. For if there

was no ſuch Thing as a vicarious Sacrifice under the Law, or no Commutation of Puniſhment admitted in any Caſe at all, it is plain, that *Paul* could not refer to any ſuch Practice, or ſuppoſe the Death of Chriſt to be analogous to ſomething under the Law that had never exiſted, not ſo much as in Suppoſition. And therefore the Chriſtian Prieſts, who have introduced this Notion of a vicarious, penal Sacrifice, have run into groſſer Abſurdities, and more dangerous Errors concerning it, than ever the *Jewiſh* or *Pagan* Prieſts had done. But, as this is a Matter of great Conſequence, it may not be amiſs to conſider the Buſineſs of Sacrifices a little farther, as the Caſe ſtood from the Beginning, both among the *Jews* and *Gentiles*. The Word Sacrifice, in its moſt general Acceptation, ſignifies ſomething offered to God by a free and voluntary Act of Obedience to his Will, and with which God is well pleaſed and diſpoſed to favour the Perſon, as by ſuch Sacrifice or free Obedience God's Sovereignty and ſupream Juriſdiction is acknowledged and ſubmitted to.

From hence it is evident, that to bring any Act of Obedience under the proper Notion of Sacrifice, ſomething muſt be reſign'd and given up at the Command of God that was dear and valuable to the Owner, Poſſeſſor, or Enjoyer of it, and which he would not have parted with, but in Obedience to the

the Will of God, as an Acknowledgment of his ſupream Authority, and abſolute Right of Commanding. And therefore the Acts of Charity, Bounty and Munificence, when Men part with their Property, Eaſe or Pleaſure, for the Good of others, to promote the Happineſs of Society, and eſpecially to maintain the Honour of God, or the Credit and Intereſt of Virtue and true Religion in the World; theſe are the moſt acceptable and valuable Sacrifices of all, as they are the moſt natural and direct Means of pleaſing God, and of continuing or regaining his Favour. And here it cannot be ſuppoſed, that any Thing thus ſacrificed and given up can be profitable to God, or at all affect him who has the abſolute, original Right to, and Property in, every Thing. Nor does the Value of the Sacrifice at all depend on the real, intrinſick Worth or Value of the Thing itſelf, but only on the Value of it, in the Opinion or Eſtimation of the Donor. And therefore when a Man parts with his darling Luſts and moſt beloved Vices, his Pride and Ambition, his ill-got Wealth and uſurp'd Power; theſe are the higheſt and moſt meritorious Sacrifices of all, tho' here what is parted with, or ſacrificed to the Lord, is worth nothing in itſelf, and could only tend to the Ruin and Deſtruction of the Poſſeſſor or Enjoyer.

Now, as God hath always declared himſelf well pleaſed with ſuch Acts of Obedience and Reſignation to his Will, and as they muſt be thus pleaſing to him, in the Nature and Reaſon of the Thing itſelf, they were in their original and true Meaning very properly called reconciling, atoning, or propitiatory Sacrifices, Donations, or Reſignations to the Lord. That God is placable, reconcileable, and propitious to Sinners, upon their Repentance or Reformation, and a ſtrict Courſe of Obedience for the future, is a Truth founded in Nature, and confirm'd by the whole Courſe of Providence, to the Experience of all Mankind. To affirm the contrary, would be denying the Mercy and Goodneſs of God, as natural, eſſential Attributes and Perfections, and thereby leaving no rational Ground of Hope or Truſt in him, from any Revelation whatever; ſince all Revelation muſt pre-ſuppoſe Reaſon, and be founded in it, and cannot make any Thing fit and reaſonable, that was not ſo before. And as this Doctrine of Repentance and perſonal Obedience for the Time to come was the true, original Method of propitiating the offended Deity, and reconciling God to Man, founded in Nature, and confirmed by all the Declarations of Scripture; ſo it is the only Reparation or Satisfaction that a Sinner can make, or God accept.

Theoph.

Theoph. You muſt give me Leave here, to interrupt you a little before you go farther. For notwithſtanding the Strength of your Expreſſions, I cannot ſee how the Notion you here advance, and ſo poſitively declare for, as founded both in Nature and Scriptures, can poſſibly conſiſt with the Method of Reconciliation, Propitiation, and Atonement by the Death of Chriſt, as a Sacrifice for our Sins, which is plainly taught by St. *Paul*, and every where ſuppoſed and maintained in the *New Teſtament*. *Chriſt died for us, the Juſt for the Unjuſt, that he might bring us to God. He was made Sin for us, tho' he knew no Sin. He hath given himſelf as a Ranſom for us. He hath purchaſed and redeemed us with his Blood, and it is by him, through the Blood of the Croſs, that our Peace, Atonement, or Reconciliation is made with God.* Theſe, and others of like Import, are very ſtrong Expreſſions, and as I imagine, cannot eaſily be got over, under any Pretence of a figurative or metaphorical Way of ſpeaking. It can ſignify but little in this Debate, between you and me, to ſay, as you often have done, that the Doctrine here ſuppoſed is abſurd, irrational, and ſuch as can have no Foundation in Nature. For the main Queſtion between us, is, whether this be not a Scripture Doctrine, and a Doctrine taught by St. *Paul*; and if it is, you muſt either ſome Way or other reconcile the Doctrine to Reaſon, or

give up your great Apoſtle *Paul*, which yet you ſeem very loth to do. I muſt own, that I was not ſatisfy'd with what you offer'd about it in your foregoing Diſcourſe. I think, you have yet touch'd it but very ſuperficially, and the Matter is of ſuch Conſequence, as not to be paſs'd over too ſlightly. I muſt confeſs, indeed, that I cannot as yet anſwer ſome of your Arguments, by which you have endeavour'd to prove this Doctrine of redundant Merit, or imputed Righteouſneſs to be abſurd and irrational; but yet, it ſtill ſeems to me to be the Scripture Doctrine, and the Doctrine of St. *Paul* concerning Chriſt; and unleſs you can ſatisfy me to the contrary, you would ſooner make me a Deiſt than a Chriſtian in your Way.

Philal. I think, I ſee now where the Matter ſticks with you; you ſuppoſe it to be a Scripture Doctrine, as maintained by St. *Paul*, that Chriſt died to reconcile God to Man, ſo as to diſpoſe him to be merciful, or to make it fit and reaſonable for him to pardon Sin upon Repentance, and a conſequent holy Life; or which is the ſame Thing, that ſuppoſing the true Repentance and ſincere Obedience of Sinners, yet this could not have been a reaſonable or ſufficient Ground of God's pardoning Mercy and Acceptance, without ſuch a Sacrifice and prior Satisfaction made by the Blood of Chriſt. This, I know, is the common Suppoſition; and yet I may venture

venture to declare, that there is not the leaſt Ground or Foundation for it in St. *Paul*'s Writings, or in any Part of the *New Teſtament*. It is every where declared, that Chriſt died to bring us to God by Repentance and new Obedience, to conquer our Enmity to God, and reconcile us to his holy Nature and Will. Chriſt therefore *died and roſe again, that he might purify us to himſelf, a peculiar People, zealous of good Works*; that he might ſeal and confirm to us the Promiſe of a *better Inheritance*, take off our Hearts from the inordinate Love of the World and ſenſual Pleaſures, and thereby qualify us for the pardoning Mercy and Acceptance of God, in the Practice of all *Sobriety*, *Righteouſneſs* and *Godlineſs*. But it is no where ſaid, or ſo much as intimated, that Chriſt died to diſpoſe or enable God to pardon Sin upon Repentance, or to make the Exerciſe of his Mercy fit and reaſonable againſt the contrary Demands of his Juſtice. This, which is the common Topick of Pulpit Declamations, is all human Invention, and not Scripture, and might rather be call'd Raving than Reaſoning.

Theoph. You are now, indeed, come to the Point, and have touch'd upon the true Ground of the Scruples and Difficulties I was under. And tho' you think you had clear'd up the Matter before, yet perhaps, I may detain you longer upon the Subject than you ex-

pected. If you have given a true Account of the Death of Chriſt, as a propitiatory Sacrifice for Sin, all our Proteſtant, Reforming Divines were groſſly miſtaken about it, and the Chriſtian Proteſtant Clergy in general, ever ſince, have quite perverted the Scripture Doctrine of Chriſt's Death and Sufferings, and given us a perfect new Goſpel.

Philal. I cannot help this if it be ſo; and therefore, I preſume, that you do not intend it as an Objection to any Thing hitherto ſaid. That our Proteſtant, Reforming Divines ſuppoſed Juſtification or Acceptance with God by the Death of Chriſt, as a Sacrifice for Sin, to be antecedent to, and independent of Sanctification, or Purity of Heart and Life, is very true. And therefore, while they depended on Juſtification and Acceptance with God, from the redundant Merits and imputed Righteouſneſs of Chriſt alone, tho' they would not ſay, that perſonal Holineſs was unneceſſary, or that the Goſpel did not require it; yet they ſpoke of it in very contemptible Terms, and conſidered Patience, Humility, Self-denial, Sobriety, Righteouſneſs and Godlineſs, and all the Chriſtian Virtues excited and influenced by the Hope and Expectation of eternal Life and Happineſs: They conſider'd, I ſay, and repreſented all theſe as filthy Rags, menſtruous polluted Garments, Droſs and Dung, and ſuch poor, dreggy, poiſoned, contaminated Stuff as could not

not at all ſerve to reconcile God to us, or recommend us to his Favour. They who thought otherwiſe, were branded with the infamous Name of Legaliſts, and rejected as Strangers and Aliens to the Covenant of Grace, as Men who underſtood not the Privilege of Saints by Jeſus Chriſt, and who deſerv'd no Benefit by his Death and Sufferings. Now I ſhould be glad to know, *Theophanes*, Whether this was not pleading the Merits of Chriſt againſt Goſpel Obedience, and ſetting up a Scheme of *Juſtification* independent of Sanctification?

Theoph. I muſt own that I have always thought the *Calviniſtical* Hypotheſis of Juſtification to be attended with very great Difficulties, and that in its natural Conſequences it muſt deſtroy and ſet aſide the Neceſſity of Holineſs or Goſpel Obedience, as any Means or Condition, on our Part, of Happineſs and divine Favour. For if Men may be fully and completely juſtify'd and accepted of God, by the redundant Merits and imputed Righteouſneſs of Chriſt, antecedent to any free Actions, or Choice of their own, it ſeems very plain, that no perſonal Righteouſneſs, or voluntary free Obedience, can be neceſſary to their Salvation; or which is the ſame Thing, to their Juſtification, Pardon and Acceptance with God. And yet I muſt look upon it in the *Calviniſts* only, as a ſpeculative Error, and aſcribe it to a certain Darkneſs

neſs and Confuſion in their Underſtandings. For to do them Juſtice, Multitudes of them act againſt their Principles, and are as conſcientious, exact and careful in their Practices, as other People. And, indeed, none of them would preſume to ſay, that Holineſs, or Purity of Heart and Life, is not a neceſſary Qualification for Happineſs, though they would not allow it to be any Means or Condition of it, as our own free Obedience and Choice.

Philal. Your Account of *Calviniſm* is very juſt ſo far as it goes, and I believe with you, that theſe Men's Hearts have been often better than their Heads; and that their Errors have been more owing to the Confuſion of their Underſtandings, than to any real Intention or Deſign againſt Virtue and true Religion. But ſtill the Principles themſelves muſt be the ſame, and their natural Conſequences the ſame, ſo far as Men really believe them, and act upon them. But to begin where you left off, and carry the *Calviniſtical* Scheme a little farther; it is plain, that in this Hypotheſis, Man is not a free Agent, but God treats him as a mere intelligent Machine, in an abſolute, arbitrary Way, by mere Will and Pleaſure, with regard both to Salvation and Damnation. Such as God intends or decrees to ſave, he firſt juſtifies them freely by Chriſt, and without any Act or Concurrence of their own, and

then

then ſanctifies them by neceſſary Grace, and the irreſiſtible Operations of the Spirit. And thoſe whom he reſolves to damn, he hath left out of the Liſt of Redemption, and determined to with-hold that neceſſary Grace, without which, they cannot ſo much as entertain a good Thought, or do a good Action. Now this Scheme, monſtrous and abſurd as it is, is yet all of a Piece, and the plain and neceſſary Conſequence of Juſtification and Acceptance with God, not by perſonal Obedience, but by an arbitrarily imputed Righteouſneſs of another. For it is certain, that whatever Chriſt undertook or performed for us, was previous to any Action, Choice, or Concurrence of our own. For it cannot be ſuppoſed that Chriſt did not finiſh the Work which he had undertaken, but left it to us to perfect and complete it.

But this wretched, inſufferable Scheme of Superſtition and falſe Religion, as it made Multitudes of Bigots and Enthuſiaſts at firſt, ſo it has brought forth the Atheiſts of this Age. For Atheiſm is the natural Production of Superſtition and Enthuſiaſm, as one Extreme terminates in and begets another. An Atheiſt is only an Enthuſiaſt between ſleeping and waking, in which Sort of Delirium he ſeems enamour'd on Reaſon as his Miſtreſs and Idol, while he is raving againſt God and Providence. The Enthuſiaſt is commonly grave and ſevere, but the Atheiſt

iſt gay and ludicrous; one groans and ſighs, and the other laughs and ſneers at Religion and Virtue. The Enthuſiaſt in his ſullen, dumb Fits is always premeditating Miſchief, and waiting for an Opportunity to ruſh upon you unawares, or ſtab you in the Dark; but the Atheiſt gives fair Warning, and cries out I am unclean, unclean! Stand off or I ſhall deſtroy you. In ſhort, theſe are only two different Species of Diſtraction: The Enthuſiaſt is deeply and ſullenly out of his Wits, and the Atheiſt is merrily and rantingly mad, and both are owing to the ſame general Cauſe, and may be reckoned the two oppoſite and diſtinct Sorts of religious Lunacy. And one of theſe Extremes Men muſt almoſt neceſſarily run into, when they bewilder themſelves in the Clouds and Darkneſs of their own Imaginations, and ſeek for Religion any where, without the Boundaries of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs.

Theoph. I as much diſlike the *Calviniſtical* Scheme as you; and I agree with you, that Superſtition and falſe Religion often drive Men out of all Religions, as one Extreme is naturally productive of another. But then, as the Doctrine of Chriſt's dying and offering himſelf up to God, as a Sacrifice of Propitiation for the Sins of the World, is certainly a Scripture Doctrine, it muſt be ſome Way or other explained and underſtood agreeably to Truth and Reaſon; and

our modern *Arminian*, or moderate *Calviniſtical* Divines have more rational, conſiſtent Notions of this Matter. They allow the Neceſſity of Holineſs, or Purity of Heart and Life, in order to our Juſtification and Acceptance with God, not only as a natural, ſubjective Qualification for Happineſs and divine Favour, but as a neceſſary Condition to be performed by us, as moral free Agents. And this avoids all the Abſurdities of the high *Calviniſtical* or *Antinomian* Scheme, without derogating any Thing from the Honour of Chriſt, as to any Thing that the Scripture ſuppoſes him to have done for our Salvation and Acceptance with God.

Philal. I ſhall freely grant, that this new modern or moderate Scheme, as you call it, is infinitely preferable to the other, as not being clogg'd with any of its particular Abſurdities. But then, I think, it would be ſtill better, were it a little clearer and more intelligible: For I muſt frankly own to you, that I could never underſtand the Doctrine of Satisfaction, even as the *Arminians* and moderate *Calviniſts* would explain it. If they mean any Thing, I think it muſt be this; that God hath accepted the Death and Sacrifice of Chriſt, as a ſatisfactory and valuable Conſideration for his pardoning Sin upon Repentance; and that now, upon this Satisfaction given, he is at Liberty to exerciſe Mercy againſt all the contrary Claims of

of his Juſtice, which otherwiſe he could not have done conſiſtent with his Wiſdom and rectoral Juſtice. And that, when Sin was once committed, God could not, conſiſtent with Juſtice, pardon it, how ſincerely ſoever the Sinner might repent of and forſake it. And in this Way there was no Pardon or Remiſſion of Puniſhment at all, for what was taken from us who had deſerv'd it, was laid upon Chriſt, who had never deſerv'd it, and while the Guilty was ſpared, the Innocent muſt be puniſhed to ſatisfy Juſtice. And hereby Juſtice had its full Demands of Puniſhment, either in *Quantity* or *Value*, as much as if no Pardon or Remiſſion had been ever granted at all. This is, doubtleſs, a moſt amazing and ſtupendous Projection beyond the Comprehenſion of Men or Angels! But this certainly was never the Contrivance of divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, but of human Ignorance and Superſtition.

But to ſupport this wild Conceit, our ſyſtematical Divines have forged a Covenant between the Father and Son, which they call the Covenant of Redemption. In which, as they pretend, it was ſtipulated and agreed, that the Death of Chriſt, as a vicarious Sacrifice for Sin, ſhould be the Condition of God's pardoning Sin upon Repentance. But when they can produce any original Draught of this Covenant, or any Thing like it in Scripture, I may promiſe to be their Bond-Slave for-

ever. But the Truth is, that they patch'd up this Covenant among themſelves without Conſent of either of the Parties, and then they clapt together ſeveral independent Paſſages of Scripture, moſt groſſly miſunderſtood and perverted, to make good their Authority for it. And from hence I doubt our ſyſtematical Divines, even the moſt moderate of them, will find it very difficult to prove their Doctrine of Satisfaction from Scriptures, or that it was not originally founded in groſs Ignorance, Superſtition, and human Invention.

Theoph. I thought I had underſtood the Doctrine of Satisfaction, as explain'd by our moderate Divines, very well; but if this Matter was clear before, you have certainly perplex'd it, and left me under ſome Doubt, whether I underſtand any Thing of it or not. But this is certain, and what I muſt ſtill inſiſt on, that Chriſt, according to the Scriptures, and in St. *Paul*'s Account, died, as a Sacrifice of Propitiation for the Sins of the World. How this ſtands in your Senſe, I think you have not yet ſufficiently explained, and therefore, without interrupting you farther, I ſhall now hear you out upon it.

Philal. I think I have ſufficiently proved, that there can be no Communication of perſonal Merit or Demerit from one individual to another, or that perſonal Rewards and Puniſh-

Puniſhments are neceſſarily and inſeparably connected with perſonal Actions in all Reaſon and Equity. And one would imagine, that this muſt be ſo very clear to every Man's Underſtanding, as to need no Proof at all. I have likewiſe prov'd, that Sacrifices were always conſidered and look'd upon, as perſonal Actions in Obedience to the Will or Command of God. And that under the Law of *Moſes* there was no ſuch Thing as vicarious Sacrifices, no Transfer from one Perſon to another, nor any Commutation of Puniſhment by Sacrifice. If this was not ſo, you ſhould have given ſome Inſtance of the contrary, which yet you have not thought fit to do; and conſequently, thus far the Argument ſtands good. Now theſe legal Sacrifices were plainly conſidered as propitiatory, reconciling, and atoning, and the Prieſt, by ſprinkling the ſacrificial Blood, was to *make*, i. e. publickly and legally to DECLARE this Atonement, or by an authentick, authoritative Right to *notify* God's Acceptance of the Sacrifice, and his being well pleaſed with it, as a Thing agreeable to his Will. And ſurely if any Thing can pleaſe God, or reconcile him to a Sinner, or diſpoſe him to exerciſe his Mercy, it muſt be ſuch Acts of perſonal Obedience, as he hath ſpecially commanded and declared himſelf honour'd by. And as the Prieſts, under the Law, publickly and authentickly declared

or

or notify'd by ſprinkling the Blood, the Acceptableneſs of ſuch Sacrifices or Services to God, ſo Chriſt by his Death, and ſhedding his own Blood, made a like publick Declaration or authentick Notification from God, of the propitiatory, reconciling Virtue or Acceptableneſs of ſuch Obedience. Or, which is the ſame Thing, he prov'd and demonſtrated by his own Example, that this Method of full and unreſerv'd Obedience and abſolute Reſignation to the divine Will, was the one and only Method of pleaſing God and obtaining his Favour, and that he would never be propitious or reconcileable to Men in any other Way. And to prove and exemplify this, Chriſt, who was not a Sinner, ſubmitted to the Law in the moſt difficult Parts of Obedience, as if he had been a Sinner; and thereby, as it were, put himſelf in the Place of Sinners. But then the Suffering and Death of Chriſt are not to be conſidered as penal, or under the Notion of moral Puniſhment. This Suppoſition has been the Ground of a whole Syſtem of Superſtition and falſe Divinity. It is certain, that Chriſt, in all his Sufferings, and in his Obedience unto Death, acted freely and voluntarily as a Servant and Subject of God, and under the Hope and Proſpect of a vaſt and glorious Reward; and therefore he was no otherwiſe puniſh'd, than as every good Man is puniſh'd by denying

himſelf and obeying God. And, I hope, it would not be ſaid, that every Thing which a righteous Perſon may ſuffer and undergo for the Sake of God, and a good Conſcience, and for the Benefit of Mankind, is a Puniſhment inflicted upon him, when he does this in Obedience to God, and in Proſpect of a Reward that is infinitely ſuperior to, and more than an Equivalent for all his Sufferings. But ſurely, ſo far as Chriſt was puniſhed, every Man is puniſhed for Virtue, Integrity, and true Goodneſs; ſince in this Caſe, every righteous Perſon muſt expect Sufferings, hard Treatment, and unjuſt Dealings from wicked, ungodly Men. It is aſtoniſhing, methinks, that our ſyſtematical Divines ſhould not ſee this, and that they ſhould be ſo much puzzled and perplexed where there is really no Difficulty.

But farther, it is certain, that the Action of the Prieſts in ſprinkling the ſacrificial Blood under the Law, was not that Obedience, which really made the Atonement, and diſpoſed God to be merciful to, and accept the Sacrificers. This was, ſurely, the voluntary, free Obedience and Offering of the Proprietors and Donors themſelves; the Acceptableneſs of which to God, and his being thereupon propitious to them, was thus ſignify'd and notify'd, by the Action of the Prieſt in that legal, authoriz'd Ritual of ſprinkling the Blood. And analogous

logous hereto, when St. *Paul* ſo often compares, in a figurative Way, the Death of Chriſt, and his ſhedding or ſprinkling of his Blood upon the Croſs, to the Action of the Prieſts under the Law, he doth not and cannot ſuppoſe, from the Nature and Force of the Compariſon, that Chriſt's Death and ſprinkling his own Blood upon the Croſs, was that very individual, perſonal Obedience, by which God muſt be reconciled, propitiated, or made favourable to us; but only the Means of it, and an authentick Declaration from God, in what Way he would accept and reward us, even in the ſame Way in which Chriſt himſelf was accepted and rewarded, by a full Conformity and Reſignation to the divine Will. This is the Way in which we muſt obtain the divine Favour, and render God merciful and propitious to us, by univerſal, unreſerv'd Obedience in Conformity to Chriſt, as the great Pattern, Exemplar, Motive, and Means of it. Chriſt, therefore, ſuffered and died on the Croſs, that he might fulfil all Righteouſneſs, exemplify the moſt perfect Obedience, obtain the Kingdom and Glory propoſed to him, and thereby put himſelf at the Head of a new Diſpenſation, under which Men ſhould be juſtify'd and accepted, or render God propitious to them in the ſame Way of Purity and Sincerity, and be excited and enabled

by the moſt powerful Motives and effectual Aids to deny all Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to lead a ſober, righteous and godly Life, in Conformity to Chriſt, their great Pattern and Exemplar.

To this End it was that Chriſt died and roſe again; for this he offered up his Life and Soul upon the Croſs, that he might obtain Power from on high, to bring us to the ſame Spirit, Diſpoſition, and Temper, and to ſet up a Kingdom of Peace and Righteouſneſs in the World. And this I take to be the true Scripture Doctrine of our Salvation, Redemption, and Deliverance from Sin and Satan by Jeſus Chriſt.

Theoph. I have given you a great deal of Trouble, *Philalethes*, upon this Argument, which I hope you will excuſe; ſince I muſt own, that I have receiv'd more Light and Information, than I could have expected, and that you have almoſt remov'd all my Doubts and Difficulties about it. But leſt I ſhould miſtake you, you will give me Leave to make a ſhort Recapitulation of what you have ſaid, ſo far as I underſtand it. You allow then, the Sufferings and Death of Chriſt, as a propitiatory Sacrifice for Sin, tho' not as the *meritorious Cauſe*, but as the *moral*, *effective Means* of our Salvation and Recovery: Not as juſtifying us in itſelf, but as directing us to, and putting us into the Way and Method of our Juſtification and

and Acceptance with God. And thus we may properly ſay, that we are juſtify'd and ſaved, by, or through Jeſus Chriſt, who by his Righteouſneſs and Obedience unto Death, hath obtained Favour of God, to ſet up a Kingdom of Peace and Righteouſneſs in the World, as the moſt rational and effectual Method of bringing Men to that perſonal Faith, Repentance, and ſincere Obedience, which was abſolutely neceſſary to reconcile God to them, to propitiate the Deity, and regain the divine Favour. And, in this Reſpect, Chriſt, by a natural and eaſy Metaphor and Figure of ſpeaking, may be call'd our *Propitiator*, our *Reconciler*, *the Captain of our Salvation*, and *the Author and Finiſher of our Faith*. And this, indeed, ſeems to me at preſent to anſwer all Difficulties, and to account for the Scripture Phraſeology, without any ſtrained and forced Interpretation or unnatural Conſtruction. If I underſtand you right in this Matter, *Philalethes*, I am highly pleaſed; but if not, you will correct me.

Philal. You take me perfectly right, *Theophanes*, and I am proud of ſuch a Proſelyte, in a Point ſo neceſſary and fundamental to all true Religion. But it is really aſtoniſhing, how Mankind ſhould run into ſuch groſs Abſurdities, and irrational, inconſiſtent Schemes concerning Sacrifices, Propitiation, and the Method of Reconciliation with God.

Theoph. It is really ſo. I muſt own that I have been often exceedingly perplex'd about it in my private, free Enquiries, tho' I have laboured as much as poſſible to be orthodox. And ſince you have already given me ſome farther Light, I hope you will now go on with your Account of Sacrifices, Propitiations, Atonements, *&c.* where I had interrupted you.

Philal. This I ſhall do with Pleaſure, and with the greater Chearfulneſs, as you ſeem now to be in a proper Temper for the Exerciſe of Patience.

The original, true Religion, therefore, of God and Nature, conſiſted in the direct, immediate Worſhip of the one true God, by an abſolute Reſignation to, and Dependence on him in the Practice of all the Duties and Obligations of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs. During this State of true Religion, Men look'd to and depended upon God, as the ſole Author of Nature, of all the Properties and Powers of ſubordinate Beings and Agents, and as the one only original, efficient Cauſe of all Things. They conſidered themſelves, indeed, as *free Agents*, or as acting without any Force or Compulſion. But then they did not imagine that God had given them any Powers and Faculties independent of himſelf, and much leſs, that he had made a material World capable of ſubſiſting and

governing itſelf by its independent Powers and Properties, at firſt communicated, without the continued Power, Agency and Efficiency of the firſt Cauſe and Author of Nature. Men, in this State of Innocency and true Religion, own'd God, not only as the Author, Contriver and Former of Nature, but as the Preſerver, Supporter and Director of all Nature, by his continued Agency and providential Cauſality. They conſidered all Events *good* and *evil*, as the Ordination and Appointment of God; the *one*, as the natural and juſt Reward of Wiſdom and Integrity, and the *other*, as either the neceſſary Exerciſe and Trial of *Virtue*, or as the Puniſhment and Cure of *Folly* or *Sin*. This, as I take it, was the original State of Philoſophy and true Religion, before the Apoſtaſy of Angels and Men. But the Defection firſt began among the Angels, before Man had any Being. Theſe exalted and firſt Species of intelligent Beings were created with different Powers and Capacities, and God had placed them in different Ranks and Orders in his providential Government, for the Good of the Whole. But he ſtill retain'd the ſole undivided Sovereignty, and order'd all Addreſſes to be made immediately to himſelf, ſince he had not appointed this Order to ſave himſelf the Trouble of Government, or to ſubſtitute any other Sovereign in his

Stead. This Law was obſerved for ſome Time, and the Order kept: But it was not long before the inferior and leſs intelligent Angels gave their *Chiefs* an Opportunity to rebel, and ſet up for themſelves, in Oppoſition to their Sovereign. The inferior Ranks of Angels imagined, that ſuch high Dignities and Honours above them, muſt argue not only ſuperior Wiſdom and Abilities, but peculiar Favour. And therefore, they left off addreſſing God immediately, which they fancied would be too preſumptuous; but every one thought himſelf ſecure of his Point, if he could but make an Intereſt with Lucifer or Satan, who were then reckoned the prime Miniſters. Upon which, having formed a very ſtrong Party, theſe Arch-Angels took ſuch State, and aſſumed ſuch Authority to themſelves, that they would not admit of any Addreſſes to the King of Kings, but what ſhould paſs through their Hands, as prime Miniſters and Favourites. But this Arrogance could not paſs long unpuniſhed in Heaven, tho' the Plot was ſo deeply laid, and the Conſpiracy carry'd ſo far, that it occaſioned a War, in which Lucifer, Satan, and all their Adherents were totally routed, and after an intire Overthrow baniſh'd for ever from the Kingdom of Heaven, and doom'd to live as Exiles upon this wretched Earth, till farther Judgment ſhould be given. And hereupon it was enacted, as an eternal, immutable Law of God

God and Nature, that no Petition ſhould ever be heard or accepted for the future, but what ſhould come immediately from the Petitioner himſelf. The fallen, ejected Angels being thus conquered and caſt down, ſoon began to play the ſame Game here, and quickly drew Mankind into the ſame rebellious, deſtructive Scheme. Man, in the Infancy and Innocency of human Nature, had hitherto kept his Integrity, and worſhipped none but God: He had known no other Sovereign, and ſubmitted to no other Authority. But theſe apoſtate Angels coming into the World, made Men believe that they were Gods, and that they could eſtabliſh an Ariſtocratical Government upon Earth, much better than the Monarchy of Heaven. They made Man believe, that God did not require ſuch an abſolute Submiſſion, or at leaſt, that he had no Right to it, and that their Project of a mix'd, moderated Government was much better. The Argument, it ſeems, was plauſible; but as ſoon as the Experiment was made, every Thing began to grow worſe and worſe: For theſe apoſtate, fallen Angels did not open their whole Deſign, and carry their Point at once; but they did it gradually. At firſt they perſuaded Men, that they, as Miniſters of Providence, had very great Power, and that God committed the Government of the World, and the Intereſts of Mankind into their Hands. And here, at firſt, they

inſiſted

inſiſted upon no more, than that Men ſhould always own their Authority, and mention their Names in their Addreſſes to God, and pray that he would hear, and anſwer, and favour them, by the Means, Inſtrumentality, and Agency of theſe prime Favourites and Miniſters of his Providence. But this Point being thus eaſily gain'd, theſe Dæmons ſoon carry'd it a little farther, and prevail'd with Men to pray directly to them, as Interceſſors and Mediators with God for them. And this ſeem'd but a very natural Conceſſion after the former, and was ſoon yielded. Men now began to ſee the Arrogance and Preſumption of addreſſing God immediately, and therefore thankfully ſubmitted themſelves to the Aſſiſtance and good Offices of theſe mediatorial Gods. But theſe apoſtate Angels, or Dæmons, could not ſtop here; for having gone thus far, they ſoon perſuaded their Worſhippers, that God had made them abſolute and independent in their ſeveral Diſtricts, or within their own peculiar Provinces; and conſequently, that there could be no Need to addreſs any but themſelves for the Bleſſings and Benefits which they were authoriz'd to beſtow. And this Point being once gain'd, the true God was quite excluded with reſpect to any religious Worſhip or Obedience, and all his Honour and Glory given to others: At firſt, to the fallen Angels, who pretended to come from the Sun, Moon,

Moon, and Stars, and to be the reſident Gods, and providential Diſpenſers of Good or Evil to the World, from theſe heavenly Bodies. But Mankind being thus revolted from Reaſon, and apoſtatiz'd from the Knowledge and Worſhip of the true God, could not ſtop here; for after they had terminated their ultimate, religious Worſhip and Obedience on theſe primary, angelical or celeſtial Mediators, they thought it neceſſary to make a ſubordinate Intereſt and Friendſhip in addreſſing them. And from hence they contriv'd and conſtituted a vaſt Number of other inferior Mediators and Interceſſors, who might have a nearer and more immediate Concern for them, and who might preſent their Prayers and Petitions with greater Acceptableneſs and Hopes of Succeſs to the original, primary Mediators, or planetary celeſtial Gods. And thus they canoniz'd their own Heroes and great Men after their Death, and ſent them to the planetary Orbs or heavenly Manſions, where they believ'd they were to reſide as chief Favourites and prime Miniſters of the firſt Mediators. And by this Means they have always a Friend at Court, or their Sub-miniſters in waiting at every celeſtial Manſion. To theſe Sub-mediators as managing the Affairs and Intereſts of their reſpective Families and Countries, they gave the Names of the Sun, Moon and Planets, or the Names of the original Manſions of

of the primary, angelical, or celeſtial Gods. But becauſe theſe celeſtial Manſions, and conſequently the Gods themſelves, were ſometimes out of Sight, and hid from the Eyes of Mortals, by the Interpoſition of the Earth, by which Means their Adorers and Invokers could not directly gaze on them, or worſhip them in View; therefore they erected Temples to them, and contrived Images to be inſpired with the Virtues, benign Influency, and ſpecial Preſence of the Gods to whom they were devoted, and before which they might preſent their Petitions at any Time, with Succeſs and Approbation. And hence *Terah*, the Father of *Abraham*, is ſaid by all the Eaſtern Writers quoted by Dr. *Hyde*, to have been the chief God-founder or Artificer in this Way, that had ever been known in *Chaldea*, and to have raiſed to himſelf and Family a vaſt Eſtate, by inſpiring theſe Statues and Images with the Virtues and Influences of the planetary, mediatorial Gods. And in Proceſs of Time, ſuch was the groſs Stupidity of the Vulgar, theſe primary and ſecondary Gods were all laid aſide, and the real Veneration and Worſhip was paid to the Maker itſelf, or to the Statues and Images of Braſs, Iron, Wood and Stone. But how ſuch a Perverſion of all Religion, and of human Nature itſelf, ſhould ever take Place, and prevail among Mankind, you might perhaps wonder; and, therefore, I may inform

you, that all this came about by the Power of *Prieſtcraft* working upon Ignorance and *guilty Fear*. And here I muſt again reſume the Subject of Sacrifices, where you had occaſionally broke it off.

A Sacrifice, therefore, in its original and proper Import, as I had obſerv'd to you, ſignifies any Act of Obedience, where ſomething dear and valuable to the Perſon, was given up and parted with, in Submiſſion and Reſignation to the Will of God. And ſuch Acts of Obedience as are moſt acceptable to God, were conſidered as reconciling and propitiatory, and the moſt effectual Means of obtaining or regaining the divine Favour, where God had been provoked and diſpleaſed. And becauſe Bounty, Liberality and Munificence were ſuppoſed as the higheſt Expreſſions of Love to God and Man, therefore publick Feaſts and ſplendid Entertainments by Patriarchs, Princes, and great Men, as the ſureſt Marks and Expreſſions of Bounty and Liberality, ſoon obtain'd the Name of Sacrifices in an eminent Senſe, and as diſtinguiſh'd from other Acts of Charity and Munificence. And as theſe Feſtivals were intended as publick Expreſſions and Declarations of Joy and Thankfulneſs for Bleſſings receiv'd, as a Means of ſtrengthening and cementing mutual Friendſhip and Alliances; and as highly pleaſing and acceptable to God at the ſame Time; they were from hence properly enough call'd, and eſteemed

teemed as eucharistical, fœderal, and propitiatory; tho' sometimes one might be principally in View, and sometimes the other.

At first, the prime Patriarch, or Founder of the Feast, managed it and directed it in Person, and was the chief Steward, as well as the Founder. But this soon grew troublesome, and was thought below the Dignity of Princes and great Men; and, therefore, they appoint Stewards or chief Officers under them, to inspect and preside over the whole Affair: These Officers were to proclaim the Sacrifice or Feast, to welcome the Guests, to direct and look over the Butlers, Bakers, Butchers, and Cooks, to declare the Occasion of the Festival, and recommend all to the divine Blessing and Acceptance. And these chief Stewards, or Masters of the Feast, were called *Priests*, and were at first paid out of the publick Treasury, like all other State-Officers, at the King's Pleasure. But being once put into such an Office, they soon made themselves necessary, confin'd almost all Religion to such Sacrifices or Festivals, and placed the whole Merit of them to the Discharge of their Function. And thus from being Masters of the Ceremony, and Supervisors of the Feast, or the chief Butlers, Bakers, Butchers, and Cooks, they mounted themselves, by Degrees, into the Throne of God, and made both Princes and People depend on them for all the Blessings they could expect from Heaven.

The

The firſt Inſtance we have now extant of any ſuch independent Prieſthood, is that which *Joſeph* ſettled and eſtabliſhed in *Egypt*. When he went down thither the Prieſthood was abſolutely dependent on the Crown, and the High Prieſt or chief Pontiff had his daily Allowance, *durante beneplacito*, from the King. After this great Man was made prime Miniſter, and placed at the Head of Affairs in *Egypt*, he managed Matters ſo well, that in the Courſe of fourteen Years he had abſolutely enſlav'd the whole Nation, and ruin'd the richeſt and moſt flouriſhing Kingdom then in the World. He obliged the *Egyptians* firſt to bring in all their Money, Goods and Chattels, then to ſell their Lands of Inheritance, and laſt of all themſelves, as perpetual Vaſſals to the Crown: And all this juſt to keep themſelves alive under great Struggles and Difficulties for ſeven Years. Some ſay, he contrived this not only to aggrandize himſelf, but to make his own Family and People abſolute Maſters of ſo rich and fertile a Country: But I ſhall not diſpute that Matter now. All that I am concern'd to prove is, that he made the Prieſthood in *Egypt* independent, which was not ſo before, and that for exempting the whole prieſtly Order from this common Slavery, he had at leaſt this private Intereſt, that he had, as the Story aſſures us, married the High Prieſt's Daughter.

In

In the fourth Year of the Famine, or the Year after the Deſcent of the *Hebrew* Shepherds, the *Egyptians* having brought in all their Money, Cattle, and perſonal Property, and the Calamity ſtill growing upon them, came and propoſed to ſurrender their Lands of Inheritance, and to ſell themſelves, as perpetual Vaſſals to the Crown: This Propoſition was readily accepted by the Miniſter, and the Bargain ſtruck with the People: But here the Prieſts did not ſurrender their Lands to the Crown, becauſe they had an ordinary or annual Penſion from the King, and were under no Neceſſity of ſelling their Inheritance, or abating of their Expences, under this publick Calamity. And this was, doubtleſs, a very great Favour, and ſhews, that the prime Miniſter had adopted the Prieſthood as his own Family. See *Gen.* xlvii. 22. But afterwards, the publick Diſtreſs and Calamity ſtill increaſing, the Miniſter obtained a Grant from the King in Perpetuity for the Prieſts Lands, ſo as to render them unalienable or irreſumable by the Crown: For after this, there is another Reaſon given for the Prieſts not ſelling their Lands, becauſe the King could not reſume them, they *were not Pharaoh*'s, or alienable to the Crown, like all other real and perſonal Property, *ver.* 26. This Story is plainly and ſimply told, and ſince it redounds not much to the Credit of the Miniſter and the Hiſtorian, was certainly in

in *Joseph*'s Interest, there can be no Reason to doubt of the Truth of it.

Thus the Priesthood was made hereditary, and a Hierarchy was establish'd in *Egypt*, independent of the Crown. And the Priests having gain'd this grand Point, and being the Masters of the Ceremony at all publick Feasts and Solemnities before, by the King's Designation, they soon made themselves Masters, not only of the People, but of the King himself, with whom they had shared the whole Property of the Nation. And being now exempted from all Offices and Employments Civil or Military, and made independent of the Crown, they set themselves diligently to the Study of occult Philosophy, or natural Magick, in which they made great Improvements, which they kept as deep Secresy to themselves. And hereby they made the People believe, that they had an immediate Intercourse and Communication with the Gods, that they could converse freely and at Pleasure with the Angels and planetary Dæmons, and were let into their secret Designs towards Mortals. This soon made their Order esteemed as sacred, and procured them the Veneration and blind Submission of the astonish'd, stupify'd Vulgar.

From this Time *Egypt* became the Mother of Superstition, the Parent and Patroness of new Gods, and the Mistress of Idolatry throughout the World. Every new God was

a new Revenue to the Prieſts, and all Nations received their Gods from *Egypt*; for this, after the Eſtabliſhment of the Hierarchy, or independent Prieſthood, was a Land of Miracles and Prodigies continually wrought by theſe holy Magicians; which had ſuch an Effect upon the *Iſraelites*, in the Courſe of two hundred and ten Years, while they remained in *Egypt*, that nothing could influence them but Miracles; they could not believe in, or truſt God in the ordinary Courſe of Providence, and would never have regarded *Moſes* if he could not have out-done the *Egyptian* Sorcerers.

I have given this ſhort Account of the Hierarchy in *Egypt*, to ſhew how neceſſarily civil and ſpiritual Slavery are connected, and how naturally productive they are of one another. The Prieſts in *Egypt* could never have ſecured to themſelves ſuch a Dominion over Conſcience, if they had not, by an Incidence of Providence, firſt gain'd an Independency both of the Crown and the People. Nor could the People have thus tamely reſign'd their Property and civil Rights, had they not in great Meaſure given up their Underſtandings before. For no ſtanding Forces in *Egypt* could have guarded the Magazines and Store-houſes of Corn, while the Populace were ſtarving and reſigning their All, had not the Prieſts gain'd too great an Aſcendant over

their

their Understandings and Consciences, before Things came to this Extremity. But the Priests in *Egypt*, upon the Occasion as already related, having gain'd this Point of the enslav'd, miserable People, to make them believe, that the Virtue of their Sacrifices, and the Acceptableness of all their Services, must depend upon them, hereby gave the last mortal Wound and Stab to all true Religion. And all other Nations, who receiv'd this Notion from them, lost the original and only true Doctrine of Propitiation and Atonement, or of the Means of reconciling Sinners to God, and regaining his Favour: And from henceforward Men placed their Hopes of Acceptance with God upon the authoritative Declarations or Notifications of the Priests, who knew nothing of the Heart, and who could not judge of the Sincerity or Insincerity of the Sacrificers: And thus the external, authoritative Action of the Priest came to stand for the inward Sincerity of the Person; and in Consequence of this, the Notion of Propitiation and Atonement came to be transferred from a *personal* to a vicarious Acceptableness and Obedience, or to the Priests as the prime Favourites of Heaven, and the only authoriz'd Mediators between the People and God: And hence the Priests had now the sole Power of opening and shutting the Gates of Heaven to whom they pleased, *i. e.* to such as should please or displease them. How

far the *Jews* gave into this Notion, and how far the Chriſtian Prieſts have ſince indulged the People in it, may be conſidered afterward. But, ſurely, they who have underſtood St. *Paul* in this Senſe, and who would transfer the *Egyptian* and *Jewiſh* Doctrine of Atonement and Propitiation to the Prieſthood of Chriſt, have greatly miſtaken the Chriſtian Doctrines, and groſſly impoſed on the Chriſtian World.

Theoph. I think no Chriſtian Divine would pretend to make the Death of Chriſt, as a Sacrifice or Propitiation for Sin, available to any but true Penitents, or ſuch as ſincerely believe and obey the Goſpel. And therefore, pray how do they injure or weaken the Cauſe of perſonal Righteouſneſs, or make this the leſs neceſſary? or how does the Notion of a vicarious Sacrifice or Propitiation tend to encourage Sin?

Philal. Indeed, if Men made this vicarious Obedience ſignify nothing, it could do no Hurt: But whatever is aſcrib'd to this muſt be taken off from the Obligation and Neceſſity of perſonal Obedience, ſo far as it is conſidered as vicarious and imputable.

Theoph. I think not. But it is rather a farther Encouragement and Security, to the Acceptableneſs of perſonal Obedience. But, if you mean that the Death of Chriſt was a vicarious Sacrifice for Sin, or a vicarious Obedience, ſo as to exempt us from the Neceſſity

of perſonal Obedience, you argue againſt Nobody, for Nobody aſſerts any ſuch Thing.

Philal. I hope you remember, that we are now talking of vicarious Obedience, or of Chriſt's obeying and ſuffering in our Place and Stead. And yet this is what you ſeem to affirm and deny at the ſame Time. For if perſonal Obedience be ſtill equally neceſſary, and if Repentance and new Obedience muſt be always, and upon every Suppoſition equally acceptable to, and available with God, pray where is the Uſe, Reaſon, or Neceſſity of vicarious Obedience? I hope, you will not ſay, contrary to all the Declarations of God, and to all the Notifications of his Will both in Nature and Scripture, that he could not pardon Sin, and accept the penitent, returning Sinner, without a prior Satisfaction made; ſince this muſt deprive him of his natural, eſſential Goodneſs and Mercy, and lay the whole Obligation ſomewhere elſe. This would throw you upon the ſame Abſurdities that had been urged before, and to which you had given no Anſwer. But if we ſhould talk at this Rate, we muſt reſume and run over the whole Argument again. What Efficacy or Tendency the Obedience of Chriſt had to bring us to Repentance and the Love of God, and to devote our whole Hearts and Souls to his Service, which is the only true acceptable Sacrifice, hath been conſidered already. That Chriſt's Obedience

and Death was the moſt effectual, moral Means of obtaining this, is granted. But his Death, as the meritorious Cauſe of the Acceptableneſs of Repentance, the Love of God, and a ſincere Dedication of ourſelves to his Service, is a very ſtrange, irrational and unſcriptural Notion to me.

Theoph. I ſee we muſt always come to the ſame Point again, and it would be to little Purpoſe to diſpute it farther. And, therefore, you may now go on as you intended, with your Account of the *Jewiſh* State and OEconomy, under the *Moſaick* Law. This is a Matter of Conſequence, and ought to be farther conſidered.

Philal. But it will be neceſſary, *Theophanes*, in the firſt Place, to break off this Conference for to Night. It grows late, and we may better reſume the Diſcourſe in the Morning. And here, I ſee, comes *Rabbi Ben-Aaron:* I know you have ſome Acquaintance with him, and he always calls upon me when he travels this Way. He is a Man of Learning and good Senſe, and no great Bigot to his Religion: We ſhall ſpend the Evening with him, and I doubt not but it will be to our mutual Satisfaction.

Theoph. I gave a ſilent Attention, *Philalethes*, all this laſt Evening to your Diſcourſe with the *Rabbi.* I muſt own, that I was highly pleaſed with what paſs'd between you, and think, I never heard an Argument between

tween two ſuch Antagoniſts managed with more Decency, Temper and Candour. But as this was a private Converſation, and you had not Leave to publiſh it, you and I muſt proceed with our Subject juſt as if no ſuch Thing had interven'd. And, therefore, you will now go on with an Account of the People of *Iſrael* under the *Moſaick* OEconomy.

Philal. I had obſerv'd to you, that this People, during their long ſtay in *Egypt*, for ſix or ſeven ſucceſſive Generations, had been perfectly *Egyptianiz'd*. They had been wrought into all the Manners, Cuſtoms and Uſages, and eſpecially into the falſe Religion and groſſeſt Superſtitions of that enſlav'd and ruin'd Nation. As they had ſeen nothing for two hundred Years together, but Miracles and Prodigies wrought by thoſe prieſtly Magicians, they could conceive of no other Way of receiving Information and Inſtruction from God. And from hence, when *Moſes* undertook their Deliverance they might have been more properly called *Egyptians* than *Iſraelites*, ſince they were *Egyptians* in every Reſpect, but their Origin and Deſcent, which can make no Difference in human Nature. And it is certain, that from this Time, neither *Moſes*, nor any of their other Prophets, could ever deliver them from this *Egyptian* Darkneſs, Blindneſs of Mind, and Slavery of Conſcience, to prieſtly Power and Abſolution.

For, having loſt all inward Sincerity, and Integrity of Heart, and all true Notions of God, Religion and Providence, they had nothing to depend on but Miracles, immediate Revelations, and abſolute, uncovenanted Promiſes, and no Salvation to expect but for the Sake of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*. This was the Faith and Hope of *Iſrael*, and the imputed Righteouſneſs from which they look'd for the Salvation of the Lord. Nor could any Diſpenſation of Providence towards them ever cure them of this conſtitutional, natural Blindneſs, which they had contracted in *Egypt* among their Fellow Slaves, and under which they ſtill remain abandoned and forſaken of God to this Day.

Now this Blindneſs, Bigotry and Enthuſiaſm being the incurable Diſtemper of that wretched People, what could *Moſes* and the Prophets do with them? Or how was it poſſible to govern and influence them but in their own Way? God, therefore, ſuffer'd this for the Hardneſs of their Hearts, and gave them up to that Wickedneſs and Tyranny under ſuch a Diſpenſation of Blindneſs and Slavery, becauſe there was no other Way to be taken with them, unleſs he would have wrought the greateſt Miracle of all by converting them irreſiſtibly, and changing their Hearts, without any rational Means or Endeavours of their own.

From

From hence *Moſes* and the Prophets found it neceſſary to ſubmit to, and comply in great Meaſure with this incurable *Egyptian* Temper of the People; but not without frequent Admonitions and Warnings, that their groſs Superſtition, and Dependence on ſuch prieſtly Authority and Abſolutions, would ſome Time or other prove their Deſtruction.

Theoph. But how will you bring off *Moſes* and the Prophets from having a great Hand in encouraging and ſupporting ſuch prieſtly Impoſtures? Nay, is not God himſelf every where repreſented as inſtituting this Prieſthood, and even as confirming it by Miracles?

Philal. You know how ſtrenuouſly St. *Paul* argues againſt the literal Senſe of this Law, and how often he declares againſt it, thus underſtood, as *carnal*, *worldly* and deadly. But this brings me to a Diſtinction that I hope may ſerve to clear up the whole Matter: And that is, that *Moſes* and the Prophets being under ſuch a Neceſſity, from the Blindneſs and Obduracy of the People, always writ with a double Intention, or ambiguous Conſtruction. They had a popular, political Senſe, which as the moſt literal and obvious, was moſt ſuited to the groſs Apprehenſions, Prejudices, and Superſtitions of the Vulgar: And, at the ſame Time, another Meaning or Conſtruction, which was the true and rational one, but to be ſuppoſed and underſtood only

only by the wiſer Sort. The Caſe was this, that the moſt antient, narrative Authors, whether ſacred or prophane, did not write as mere Hiſtorians, but as Orators, Poets and Dramatiſts. In which Way of Writing they kept up to ſtrict, hiſtorical Truth, as to the fundamental, leading Facts or principal Events. But with regard to the Manner and Circumſtances of Action, the Orator and Poet often took the Liberty to embelliſh and recommend the Hiſtory with ſuch ſenſible Images and dramatick Repreſentations, as being moſt agreeable to the popular Taſte and vulgar Notions, might the more effectually move and direct the Affections and Paſſions of the People, as the great Engines and Springs of Government. The Populace or Bulk of Mankind in all Ages have been ſtrongly moved and influenced, by the Accounts and Stories of Angels, Dæmons, Ghoſts, Witches, Magicians, Dreams, Viſions, and other ſuch like ſupernatural Operations. And this hath been generally the Method of proving Things, with thoſe who know but little, and mind leſs of Nature and Reaſon. And it is certain, that the greateſt and moſt learned Men in all Ages and Countries, have accommodated themſelves in great Meaſure to this popular Taſte, as finding it much eaſier to govern the common People in their own Way, and upon their own Principles, than to bring them out of it, or to hit upon

upon any other Method that would have the ſame Effect. *Homer*'s Account of the *Trojan* War, and of the Conqueſt of the Country by the *Greeks*, is hiſtorically true as to the principal Facts and Perſons concern'd on both Sides. But his Manner and Circumſtances of Action, his miraculous Imagery and poetick Ornaments are all his own, like our *Milton* and *Shakeſpear*.

Theſe poetick Beauties, and dramatick Repreſentations of Things, can occaſion no Difficulty to thoſe who enter into the Spirit and Deſign of the Author, and who can diſtinguiſh the Orator or Poet from the Hiſtorian. But vulgar Heads muſt make ſtrange Work with ſuch Performances, who without entering into the Spirit and Deſign ſhould underſtand every Thing according to the Letter. And this was the Caſe of the *Jewiſh* Nation with regard to the Writings of *Moſes* and the Prophets, and St. *Paul* has evidently and irrefutably prov'd it.

The Hiſtory of the *Exodus*, and Conqueſt of *Canaan*, relates to Things done about ſix hundred Years before *Homer*'s Time, and is written much in the ſame oratorial and dramatick Way. For ſhould we take this Drama in the obvious literal Senſe, we muſt ſuppoſe *Moſes* to have been a more fabulous, romantick Writer, than *Homer*, *Æſop*, *Ovid*, or any of the Heathen Poets and Mythologiſts. We muſt ſuppoſe, that God

God in thoſe Days, appear'd, ſpoke, and acted like Man, or as a finite circumſcrib'd Being, in a viſible, ſenſible Manner; that he converſed intimately and familiarly with *Moſes, as a Man talketh with his Friend*; that he went out of *Egypt* at the Head of the *Iſraelite* Army, and walk'd with them thro' the *Red Sea*; that he travelled up and down with them forty Years in the Wilderneſs, always at the Beck or Call of *Moſes*, to conſult and talk with him upon every Occaſion; that God, in a viſible, ſenſible Manner, as perſonally preſent, always gave *Moſes* the Word of Command, when they ſhould march, and when they ſhould reſt, and mark'd out every Foot of Ground from Time to Time for the Encampments of their reſpective Tribes. In ſhort, God himſelf, as viſibly and perſonally preſent, acted as the General, and *Moſes* had nothing to do but to follow Orders and obey the Word of Command, which a Fool might have done as well as a wiſe Man. Nay, in the literal Senſe of the Story, ſuch was the Intereſt of *Moſes* with God, that he could make him do whatever he pleaſed; he often changed his Mind, when he had reſolved to deſtroy the People; and prevailed with him to go farther, when he had determined to leave them, and go no farther: And this, leſt the *Egyptians* ſhould mock the God of *Iſrael*, and ſay, that he was not able to conduct

duct them through the Wilderneſs, and give them the Poſſeſſion of the Land which he had promiſed them, and for which he had engaged his Honour and Veracity for above four hundred Years before to do it at this very Time. This was the main topical Argument, which *Moſes* is ſaid to have uſed with God, and by which he gain'd his Ends in every Thing, but the main Point, which was the Conqueſt of the Country, which theſe *Iſraelites* were never able to do, till *David*'s Time, about four hundred Years after the Promiſe to *Abraham* was expired. It is true, they conquered and took Poſſeſſion of a ſmall Part of the Country upon the Mountains; but they could not drive the Inhabitants out of the *Plains*, becauſe *they had Chariots of Iron*, or becauſe God never enabled them as Infantry to ſtand before the *Canaanite* Horſe. For otherwiſe, what were theſe Chariots of Iron to the Lord, any more than the Walls of *Jericho*, which fell down with a Blaſt of Rams Horns, without the *Iſraelites* ſtriking one Blow, tho' they put all the Inhabitants to the Sword? And from this Circumſtance, was it not for the Miracle, one might be apt to imagine, that the City was betray'd into their Hands, and the Gates opened to them, by *Rahab* and her Family, whom they ſaved.

Theoph. You repreſent this whole Affair, as a very ſtrange Story, and yet it ſeems to

to be the Truth of the Matter. But muſt not *Moſes* then, or at leaſt the after Hiſtorians, in giving ſuch an Account of Things, have been very great Impoſtors?

Philal. Perhaps not, unleſs you will ſay, that every Poet and Dramatiſt is an Impoſtor, or that the moſt ſimple literal Truth is always neceſſary, that all Fable or Allegory is unlawful, or that People ought not to be governed and kept in Subjection by any ſuch popular Aids and Compliances to their Humours, Prejudices and prevailing Bias, when they are uncapable of being governed in any other Way. I had obſerv'd before, that this groſſly ſtupid, ſuperſtitious and *Egyptianiz'd* People came out of their Bondage, with all the Prejudices and wrong Impreſſions, that they had contracted in that moſt wretched, enſlav'd and Prieſt-ridden Country. They had ſeen nothing in *Egypt* for two hundred Years, but a continued Series of Prodigies and Miracles wrought by theſe cunning Prieſts or Magicians. And, therefore, from hence forwards, they regarded no Conduct of common Providence towards them, and deſpiſed human Prudence, and the Uſe of natural Means; and while they continued throughout all their Generations, under the ſame *Egyptian* Darkneſs and mental Vaſſalage, they ſtill expected a miraculous Deliverance by the immediate Power of God, though they had no real Goodneſs in themſelves,

themſelves, nor any Thing to plead for ſuch peculiar divine Favour, but the Obligations which they fancy'd God had laid himſelf under in his Covenant with *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*.

But as this Nation was ſet up by Providence, as an Example to the World in all future Ages, of the natural Effects and Conſequences of Ignorance, Superſtition, Preſumption, and Immorality; it may not be amiſs here, to give a ſhort Account of the falſe Principles and fatal Errors, which prov'd the Occaſion of all this, and which iſſued in the final, total Deſtruction of their Government and political Conſtitution.

As the People of *Iſrael* had been naturaliz'd, and wrought into the Spirit, Genius and Temper of the *Egyptians*, ſo they ſtill retain'd the groſs Ignorance, ſtrong Prejudices, and conſtitutional Character of that prieſtly-enſlav'd Nation. Under this State of Blindneſs, Obſtinacy, and moral Wickedneſs, *Moſes* brought them out of *Egypt*, and in the ſame Condition God left them at laſt, when he gave them up as an everlaſting Name of Reproach, and eternal Scandal to the Profeſſion of Religion, without moral Goodneſs, or any rational Dependence on God and Providence. Now the falſe Principles and groſs Errors which occaſioned all this, and in which the *Egyptian* Prieſts and Sorcerers had confirm'd them, were ſuch as theſe: 1ſt,

1ſt, They had loſt all true Notions of God, of his natural and moral Attributes and Perfections, and of his providential Government of the World. They could believe nothing as neceſſarily and eternally true in Nature and Reaſon; but depended for the Proof of every Thing upon Miracles, Prodigies, Dreams, Viſions, Voices from Heaven, and ſuch like Manifeſtations of the immediate Power, perſonal, ſenſible Preſence, and finite, circumſcriptive Agency of God. Nothing could affect them but what was of ſuch a Nature, at leaſt in Appearance, and no other Sort of Story would take with them. But as this could be no Criterion of Truth or Falſhood, Right or Wrong in Morality, ſo they had really no ſuch Thing left among them. They receiv'd the moral Laws, Statutes and Judgments from *Moſes*, not as eternally true and right in Nature, but as the poſitive Will of God. And from hence they were equally diſpos'd to receive any Thing elſe in direct Oppoſition to it, upon any Appearance of Miracles, Revelations, or extraordinary Events. Upon this Foot they could not diſtinguiſh between the effective and permiſſive Will of God; but aſcrib'd every Thing equally to God, as ordering, directing and appointing the greateſt moral, as well as natural Evil, and though brought about by the Power and Malice of Tyrants and wicked Men.

Of

Of this I might give many flagrant Inſtances through the whole Courſe of the Hiſtory; but to any Man tolerably acquainted with the Story, there can be no Need of it.

2dly, This ſtupid, *ſtiff-necked* People, or *Generation of Vipers*, having been delivered out of *Egypt*, by an extraordinary Providence under the Conduct of *Moſes*, and brought off with their Lives and Fortunes and all their Plunder, after they had been the moſt grievous and inſupportable Plagues of an enſlav'd and ruin'd Country for above two hundred Years; from hence took it into their Heads, that they were the peculiar People of God, and ſpecial Favourites of Heaven, by an abſolute, irreverſible Decree; that they ſhould, from henceforth, ſucceed in all their Enterprizes, make themſelves Maſters of the whole World, and that God would give *Iſrael* the *Heathen for his Inheritance*, and the *uttermoſt Parts of the Earth for his Poſſeſſion*, in Deſpite of all the Efforts of any Nation upon Earth to ſubdue and conquer them. That this was a ſtrong and moſt invincible Prejudice and national Impreſſion from firſt to laſt, is evident beyond all Diſpute, from the whole Story: But how much they were miſtaken, Time hath ſufficiently demonſtrated, and we are under very little Doubt now about the

abſolute Decrees of God in Favour of *Iſrael*. But,

3dly, This national Deluſion was originally founded upon a groſs Miſtake of the Nature and Deſign of the *Abrahamick* Covenant, or God's Promiſe to *Abraham* of the Land of *Canaan*, as an everlaſting Inheritance after the Expiration of four hundred Years, to be reckoned from the Birth of *Iſaac*. This was always taken, by the *Jewiſh* Nation, as an abſolute Grant from God to *Abraham* and his Seed, or Poſterity, for ever. But not only the Nature and Reaſon of the Thing, but even the expreſs Declarations of God in the Tranſaction itſelf, proves it to have been a conditional Promiſe or proper Covenant, and that all the Benefits and Bleſſings of the Grant depended on certain Terms, and fœderal Obligations mutually ſtipulated and agreed on between God and *Abraham*. God herein promiſed to be a God to *Abraham* and his Seed, or Poſterity, for ever, to ſettle them in the everlaſting, peaceable Poſſeſſion of the Land of *Canaan*, and that they ſhould not only be happy themſelves, but prove a Bleſſing to all Nations: Provided that *Abraham* himſelf would continue to worſhip the only true God, and eſtabliſh this true Religion and Worſhip in his own Family, and that his Family and Poſterity after him would continue in the ſame Religion and Worſhip of the

the one true God, and by all their Power and Influence bring the other Nations of the World into the ſame State of fœderal, true Religion. Now this was a wiſe and reaſonable Tranſaction between God and *Abraham*, and had the Conditions been performed by *Abraham*'s Family and Poſterity, no Doubt but the Grant on God's Part had been made good. But how well *Abraham*'s Family and Offſpring, in after Ages, kept to this fœderal Agreement, and perform'd the Conditions of it, is ſufficiently known. It is certain, that after their going out of *Egypt*, notwithſtanding their extraordinary Deliverance, they could ſcarce be parallel'd, by any other Nation upon Earth, for their groſs Ignorance, Superſtition and moral Wickedneſs, which ran through all their ſucceſſive Generations, till their final Diſſolution and Deſtruction, while with a moſt amazing Stupidity and Impudence they continued to claim the Bleſſings of the *Abrahamick* Covenant, as God's peculiar People. And yet this groſs Ignorance and Superſtition of the *Jews* have been out-done, if poſſible, by ſome Chriſtians, who have ventured to eſpouſe their Quarrel, and juſtify their ſtupid Cauſe againſt God and Providence, by pretending, that ſince God has not yet made good this Promiſe to *Abraham* and his Seed, he muſt raiſe *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob* from the Dead, and put them, with their

Posterity, into the everlasting Possession of this Land before the Scriptures can be fulfill'd. That this has been the Opinion of some great Christian Schematists, I need not prove; but I would not mention their Names in such Derision, and am really sorry, that any Sort of Scripture Criticism should lead Men so far out of the Way of Reason and common Sense.

But this Nation, thus settled in their Vanity and Presumption, interpreted all the future Declarations of God, by the Prophets, in their Favour, as absolute, unconditional Grants. Another famous Instance of this is in the Case of *David*, after God, in the Course of Providence, had given him the Kingdom, and enabled him to conquer and take Possession of the whole Country, which he had at first conditionally promised to *Abraham*. And now they thought, that after four hundred Years Delay beyond the first Promise, God at last had made good his Word, and *David*'s Throne and Kingdom must surely be established for ever. And this they imagined, was fully insured to them, by the Prophet *Nathan*, who declared from God the Perpetuity of *David*'s Kingdom, or the Succession of the Crown in his House, without any Condition express'd. The Prophet's Declarations, upon this Occasion, are very full and home to the Point of a perpetual, uninterrupted Succession

ceſſion of the Crown in that Family, and *David* himſelf ſeems to have underſtood him in the abſolute Senſe, 2 *Sam.* xii. 16---29. where the literal Expreſſions are very ſtrong for the perpetual Eſtabliſhment of the Kingdom in *David*'s Family, and the King underſtands it accordingly, as *v.* 28, 29. *Therefore now, O Lord God, for thou art God and thy Words are true, and thou haſt told this Goodneſs unto thy Servant; therefore now let it pleaſe thee to bleſs the Houſe of thy Servant, that it may continue for ever before thee*; for, O Lord God, thou haſt ſpoken it, and let the Houſe of thy *Servant be bleſſed for ever with thy Bleſſing.* Theſe Expreſſions ſeem very plain and full for the Perpetuity of *David*'s Houſe in that Kingdom; and yet it is certain, that the Prophet was to be underſtood conditionally, or that this Promiſe ſhould be made good, ſo far as *David* and his Succeſſors ſhould render themſelves worthy of ſuch a Bleſſing. For the Kingdom continued in the Houſe of *David* but one Generation longer, and immediately upon the Death of *Solomon* ten of the twelve Tribes revolted under *Jeroboam*, encouraged and ſupported by the Power of *Egypt.* Upon this Defection the revolted Tribes, who were a great Majority of the Nation, turned off to the *Egyptian* Idolatry, and never more returned to their Obedience, or regarded the Law of *Moſes*;

tho' they remain'd in the Country after this about two hundred and ſixty Years, when the *Aſſyrians* under *Salmanaſſer* carry'd them into Captivity, from which Captivity they never returned, and have never ſince been known or heard of, as a diſtinct Body or ſeparate People. Thus the Kingdom of *Iſrael* was rent from the Houſe of *David*, above three thouſand four hundred and fifty Years ago, and no Tale or Tidings have been ever brought of them to this Day. The Tribe of *Juda*, indeed, with ſome ſmall Gleanings of the other Tribes, continued ſubject to Princes of *David*'s Family one hundred and twenty Years longer, or till the *Babyloniſh* Captivity. After which, no Prince of that Family ever came to the Throne. After this laſt Captivity they continued ſubject to the *Babylonians*, *Perſians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans* in their ſucceſſive Generations, till the vulgar Year of Chriſt one hundred and thirty ſix, when, after a bloody War with the *Romans*, they were intirely deſtroyed, and exterminated by *Adrian*, with a Decree which made it Death for any *Jew* ever to ſettle in that Country more. And ſince that Time, which is now ſixteen hundred Years ago, they have been abſolutely diſſolved as a Nation or Body politick, and have never ſubſiſted under any Government at all.

As theſe People always underſtood the *Abrahamick* Covenant in an abſolute Senſe, and vainly

vainly imagined, that God muſt certainly make good his Part, though they had never done theirs; ſo, after the Revolt of the Kingdom from the Houſe of *David*, at the Death of *Solomon*, they underſtood all the Promiſes concerning a national Reſtoration in the ſame abſolute Senſe. From theſe Promiſes and Declarations of the Prophets, they were immoveably fix'd in this Perſuaſion, that God, in the Courſe of Providence, would certainly and infallibly reſtore the Kingdom to *Iſrael*, under a Prince whom he would raiſe up of the Family or Line of *David*, and that this Kingdom, in the ſame Houſe, would be eſtabliſh'd for ever, and become univerſal; or that God would then give *Iſrael the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermoſt Parts of the Earth for his Poſſeſſion.* This was the vain Hope, the groſs Ignorance, and the wicked Preſumption of that wretched, deluded People. They all along expected that God ſhould ſave and deliver them by Miracles and immediate Power, without the neceſſary Condition and Qualification of their own Repentance and Reformation. And it is highly probable, that the old Stories they had among them of their miraculous Deliverances and Succeſſes, at the firſt Inſtitution of their Government (underſtanding them as they did in the popular, dramatick Senſe) might prove the chief Occaſion of that national Blind-

neſs, Obduracy, and Impenitency in all their ſucceſſive Generations. God has given Men ſufficient, natural, and moral Means of Happineſs, where they will uſe them. In the rational Uſe of theſe Means there can be no Need of Miracles, and without ſuch a Uſe of Means all the Miracles in the World can ſignify nothing. Neglecting the rational, human Means, which God has ordain'd and eſtabliſhed in the Courſe of Providence, and depending on Miracle, immediate Interpoſition, and uninſtrumental, divine Agency, is the moſt dangerous and fatal Preſumption, as it is the ſtrongeſt Hold of Ignorance and Error, and the moſt incurable Malady of this Kind. This, *Theophanes*, was the very Life and Soul of *Judaiſm*, or rather of *Egyptianiſm*, which the *Jewiſh* Nation for ever retain'd, and had therefore no great Reaſon to boaſt of their Deliverance; ſince as acted ſtill upon the ſame Principles, they were the ſame wretched People from firſt to laſt, till their Principles had deſtroy'd them, and convinced the whole World, how much they were the peculiar Favourites of Heaven. This was the preſumptuous Hope of *Iſrael*; but how far this Spirit of Infatuation afterwards prevail'd among Chriſtians, or by what Methods ſuch an Antichriſtian Tare came to be tranſplanted into the Church of Chriſt by *Peter*'s Succeſſors, may be more fully conſidered in the Courſe of this Debate; in which

which I ſhall all along take St. *Paul* for my Guide, as the great Apoſtle of the *Gentiles*, and hope you will take care to correct me, if I ſhould happen to wrong St. *Peter*, or abuſe his modern Diſciples.

Theoph. But before we come to *Peter* and *Paul*, I muſt beg Leave to talk with you a little farther about *Moſes* and the Prophets. We are agreed, that the People of *Iſrael* at firſt, and their Remains afterwards, called *Jews*, were a moſt untoward, groſſly ignorant, amazingly ſuperſtitious, and deſperately wicked Generation of Men. It is likewiſe granted, that this Spirit and Temper might have been in great Meaſure contracted and confirmed in *Egypt*; a Country which by divine Permiſſion, in the Courſe of Providence, they had enſlav'd and ruin'd. But then, I want to know, whether their Prophets and Prieſts were not equally *Egyptianiz'd?* Or whether the poor People had any ſufficient Means of better Information? It ſeems to me, that the Prophets talk'd very much in the miraculous, ſupernatural Strain, and made themſelves the infallible Oracles from God to the People.

Philal. You have brought this Matter to a proper Iſſue: And, therefore, I ſhall firſt prove, that theſe Prophets were not infallible, and that they never believ'd themſelves to be ſo; and then ſhew the Neceſſity they were under to talk as they did, and to leave that

that popular, dramatick Senſe, or political Conſtruction in all their Prophecies, Preachings, and Declamations to the common People.

Theoph. I think you have here cut yourſelf out Work enough; for the Thing you are to prove, is, that the Prophets were always either Fools or Knaves.

Philal. You may poſſibly be miſtaken. For there is certainly a Medium between *Folly* and *Knavery*, and that is *human Prudence*. And if you did not allow this, it would be impoſſible for wiſe and good Men to deal either with Fools or Knaves; or, which is the ſame Thing, they could not live in the World.

Theoph. I muſt confeſs I cannot well deny your Diſtinction; but ſtill I want to know how you will bring off the Prophets; for it ſeems they were neither *Fools* nor *Knaves*, but *prudent Men*. They could falſify and deceive without Injury, and ſecure their own private Intereſt for the publick Good. Now this, *Philalethes*, is the Philoſopher's Stone in Morality, and a Secret which you are farther to explain; and when you have done this, you will have made me a Prophet.

Philal. If this be all, I doubt not but to give you the prophetick Spirit very ſoon.

Theoph. The ſooner the better; for I would fain be a Prophet without giving up either my Underſtanding or Integrity. But, I hope,

you

you would not make me a Politician at the Expence of both, or either of theſe.

Philal. By no Means, *Theophanes*. You ſhall be a wiſe and a good Man, and yet a Prophet and a Politician too. And till you can enter into this Secret, you will know nothing of human Nature or human Life.

Theoph. This is all talking at random, and ſhooting flying. But, pray, Sir, regard the Mark, prove what you have undertaken. You have ſet up, I think, three Marks; but firſt let me ſee you hit one of them.

Philal. I am firſt then to prove, that the old prophetick Spirit was not infallible; and that *Moſes* and the Prophets did not ſo underſtand it; but conſidered it only as the beſt dernier Reſort at that Time, and under ſuch Circumſtances.

Theoph. You aim directly at this firſt and principal Mark; and when you have hit it, I ſhall think you a Prophet yourſelf.

Philal. I can aſſure you I deſire no ſuch Honour. The Character of common Senſe and Honeſty is the utmoſt of my Ambition. But not to ramble farther, the Spirit of Prophecy in *Iſrael*, or the Spirit of infallibly declaring the Mind and Will of God, as you would have it, took two different Turns, or diſtinct, popular Appearances. From the Days of *Moſes* to *Samuel*, the Oracle of *Urim* and *Thummim* was eſtabliſh'd as the laſt Reſort in Judgment, beyond which there could be

be no Appeal, and which, therefore, the People look'd upon, at firſt, as the infallible Voice and ultimate Deciſion of God in all doubtful Matters. But the Voice of this Oracle was ſoon found to be only the Voice of the Prieſt, which was always the Voice of God.

But of this firſt and grand Device, I muſt beg Leave to give a ſhort Hiſtory. While this People remain'd in *Egypt*, they had been much amuſed and ſurprized with the infallible Declarations and Deciſions of *Jupiter Hamon*; and the Prieſts here ſpoke oracularly from an Image, and had often Power and Intereſt enough to fulfil their own Predictions, and to bring about in Fact what they declared ſhould happen: Or if they could not do this, the Doubtfulneſs and Ambiguity of the oracular Declaration always gave them Room enough for an Evaſion. For the Oracle was never particular enough to be tied down to Time and Circumſtances; but all ſuch Defects might be eaſily ſupply'd by a ſtrong Faith and warm Imagination.

As ſoon as *Iſrael* came out of *Egypt*, or within three Months after their moſt wonderful Deliverance, they fell into the *Egpytian* Idolatry. And notwithſtanding all the Miracles they had ſeen there, and their miraculous Paſſage through the Red Sea, they made a Calf, as the Object of their religious Worſhip, and aſcrib'd their Deliverance to the Gods of *Egypt*. And after all the Miracles

racles of *Egypt*, and the awful Manner of giving the Law, becauſe God did not conquer their Enemies, as they expected, but left it to themſelves, they were juſt upon the Point of making themſelves a Captain, to return and ſurrender themſelves upon ſuch Conditions as the *Egyptians* would give them, which *Moſes*, with great Difficulty, and much Intreaty prevented; though he could never bring them to ſtand another Battle in forty Years after they had firſt try'd their Strength, with very ill Succeſs, againſt the *Amalekites*. The General ſaw very well how little could be expected from ſuch an Army of Bigots and blind Enthuſiaſts, who expected that God ſhould have done all for them in a miraculous Way. And this, doubtleſs, was the Reaſon, that he would never afterward attempt to penetrate into the Country, till he had raiſed up another Generation of Soldiers more enured to Hardſhips, and better diſciplin'd in War. But during this Interval of forty Years, the *Paleſtines* had Time to fortify their Towns, to diſcipline their Forces, to furniſh themſelves with Horſe, and to put themſelves in a Poſture of Defence. It cannot be doubted, but when *Moſes* undertook the Conqueſt of *Canaan*, he was perfectly well acquainted with the Situation and State of the Country. He had liv'd upon their Borders forty Years before his Return into *Egypt*, and undertaking this War, and knew

knew the *Canaanites* at that Time to be open, naked, defenceleſs and ſecure. And had the *Iſraelites* at that Time had any natural Courage and Reſolution, they might eaſily have made themſelves Maſters of the whole Land. And, indeed, that ſix hundred thouſand Men in Arms, from twenty to ſixty Years of Age, after they had endured ſo much Hardſhip in the Wilderneſs, ſhould not be able to make themſelves Maſters of a Country not a fourth Part ſo big as *England*, was rather a miraculous Cowardice or Curſe than a miraculous Conqueſt. For, it is certain, that *Joſhua*, when he attempted this Conqueſt, after the Death of *Moſes*, could poſſeſs himſelf but of a very ſmall Part of the Country, or a Tract of Land upon the Mountains not much larger than ſome of our Counties. But as theſe Southern Mountaineers of *Paleſtine*, the *Amalekites*, had ſo bravely defended their Country upon the firſt Invaſion and Attack, by a proud, inſulting Enemy, who boaſted themſelves as the peculiar Favourites of Heaven, and expected a miraculous Conqueſt; *Iſrael*, upon this great Mortification and Diſappointment, vow'd an eternal Revenge againſt *Amalek*, and never to give them Reſt as long as they had any Name or Remains left upon the Earth. But whoever conſiders the Hiſtory of this People, from the Days of *Moſes* to *David*, muſt ſee, that the *Abrahamick* Promiſe of *Canaan* had

had never been made good to them, for above four hundred Years after the Time for it was expired. And this is a Demonſtration, that they had miſtaken the Nature and Deſign of that Promiſe or Covenant, which was not abſolute, and to be fulfill'd by Miracles, as they vainly expected, but conditional, and depending on their own Repentance and Courage, or natural and moral Conduct. But as *Moſes* and the Prophets could not new-make or *unegyptianize* this People, they were forced to govern and apply to them in their own Way of Superſtition, and in which the Law of Nature, and the common Methods of God's providential Government, could not at all affect them. And, therefore, *Moſes* gave them a Law, not as a Law or Religion of Nature, but as the immediate Voice and poſitive Will of God, the Grounds and Reaſons of which they were never to examine or enquire into, nor to look upon it either as founded in the eternal, immutable Fitneſs of Things, or the Reſult of any human Wiſdom and Prudence. And having this Opinion of their Law in general, they made no Diſtinction between Morals and Rituals, between eternal, immutable, and temporary and mutable Obligations, or between the Laws of Nature, and the perfect Reverſe of them. I have ſaid enough of the Temper and Genius of this People, and of the groſs Ignorance and deep-rivetted Su-

perſtition which they had contracted in *Egypt*. And now let us ſee the natural Effects and Conſequences of this; upon what Principles *Moſes* and the Prophets governed them, and how neceſſary it was to influence and direct ſuch a Generation in ſuch a political Way.

1. Then, it is abſolutely neceſſary, to the Ends of Government, that in every Society there ſhould be ſome dernier Reſort, or ultimate Appeal in Judgment. And this laſt and ultimate Appeal in *Iſrael*, by the Eſtabliſhment of *Moſes*, was to the Oracle of *Urim* and *Thummim*. That this laſt Deciſion was made by the High Prieſt as a living Oracle, and that he gave his Anſwers, *Vivâ Voce*, while he ſat with the *Urim* and *Thummim* in Judgment, is ſo very evident from all the original Texts relating to it, that I ſhould think it needleſs to conſider the trifling Diſputes, and different Opinions of the modern *Jews*, and other learned Men about it. But the Caſe, in Fact, was, I think, plainly this: The High Prieſt, when clothed in his Pontificalibus, and ſitting in Judgment upon difficult Caſes, and Queſtions propoſed to him, put on his oracular Breaſt-Plate of *Urim* and *Thummim*, or of *Truth* and *Righteouſneſs*, in which were engraved on twelve precious Stones, the Names of the twelve Tribes of *Iſrael*. And while he wore this, ſitting in Judgment, it was preſumed, that

that he could be neither miſtaken himſelf, nor impoſe upon others, or that on this Occaſion he was both infallible and impeccable, or that his Voice and oracular Deciſion was the undoubted organized Voice of God. It is not at all improbable, that the Prieſt thus ſitting in Judgment, and delivering his Oracles, might alter his natural Tone, Air and Action, to humour the Conceit that he was under a ſupernatural and divine Impreſſion. But however that be, it is certain, that this Oracle was neither infallible nor impeccable. A remarkable Proof of this happened under the High Prieſthood of *Phinehas*, the Grandſon of *Aaron*, and which, therefore, could not have been more than eighty Years after the *Paleſtine* Conqueſt. The Occaſion of this, was a Quarrel which happened between the *Benjamites*, and a certain *Levite*, with his eloped Concubine or Whore; upon which that whole Tribe, by the Deciſion of the Oracle, was doom'd to Deſtruction: And that this was done without the leaſt Truth, natural Honour, or common Juſtice, ſeems evident from the Story itſelf, which we find in the three laſt Chapters of the Book of *Judges*.

This Affair, as related by the *Hebrew* Hiſtorian, ſtands thus: The Concubine of a certain *Levite*, having play'd the Whore, and eloped from her Huſband, fled to her Father's Houſe, where ſhe was taken, and en-

tertained four Months: The *Levite*, by this Time, being ſoftened, and willing to forgive the Woman, went to the Houſe, with an Intention to make up the Matter, and be reconciled to her. He was joyfully receiv'd, and his Terms of Accommodation accepted. They ſtay'd together three Days, making *merry and chearing their Hearts:* But the fourth Day, early in the Morning, the *Levite* aroſe, made every Thing ready, and was reſolved to ſet out; but the old Man, the Father-in-Law, with his Importunity kept for the Morning; and then, having got him into a proper Temper, prevailed with him to ſpend the whole Day, and ſtay one Night longer. This was complied with; but the next, or fifth Day, the *Levite* roſe up early, and had determined to ſet out as the Day before: But the old Man was ſtill importunate with him to ſtay longer; he kept him merry till the Evening, and then would fain have perſuaded him to ſtay another Night (which perhaps he ought to have done) but the *Levite* was now unperſuadable, and reſolved to ſet out, tho' it was very late in the Afternoon. Accordingly they ſet out in the Journey at this Time of the Day, tho', by the Story, they had better have ſtay'd, and took the Morning for it. By that Time they came to *Jebuah*, or *Jeruſalem*, the Sun went down upon them: The *Levite*'s Servant not thinking it fit to go any farther, would have perſuaded his Maſter

to turn in, and ſtop there; but the Man was now unperſuadable, and reſolved to proceed on the Journey. They went forward, and, as it appears by the Story, came to *Gibeah* of *Benjamin*, juſt in the Duſk of the Evening, or at the Cloſe of Twilight. When they came there, no Man would receive them into his Houſe, tho' they wanted neither Provender for their Aſſes, nor Proviſion for themſelves; till an old Man returning from his Work, juſt as it was dark, took them in, and gave them Lodgings, as it ſeems, to prevent worſe Conſequences. How this new-reconciled Couple had behaved themſelves, upon their coming into the Town at Night, why no Man would receive them, tho' they wanted no Proviſion either for themſelves or Aſſes, or by what Means they had raiſed ſuch a Mob about them, is not ſaid. But this is plain, from the Story itſelf, that the Woman, before her Elopement, had been a common Whore, that the Man was exceedingly enamoured of her, and reſolved to fetch her home, and be reconciled to her at any Rate, and that they had been highly regaled and cheared for five Days together, before they came into this Town, and that they had ſat out from the old Man's, or Father-in-Law's Houſe, late in the Afternoon, when they ought to have ſtay'd all Night, and took the Morning for it. The Conſequence was, that after the good old *Ephraimite* had taken

them in, and given them Protection, a violent outraging Mob, in the Middle of the Night, beſet the Houſe, and threatened Deſtruction to himſelf and Family, if he did not give up the Man whom they had ſeen with his Concubine in the Streets. The old *Ephraimite* and the *Levite* were now chearing their Hearts, and making merry together, as the Text tells us. The *Ephraimite* having no other Way to ſatisfy or appeaſe the Mob, offers to bring out his own Daughter, a Virgin, and the *Levite*'s Concubine, or rather Whore to them, to do as they pleaſed with them. The *Levite* wanted no Proviſions or Money, but had brought with him wherewithal to regale himſelf and the Family too; and, therefore, he begg'd that the Man might be ſpared. Upon this Offer, the Mob did not inſiſt upon the Daughter, or young Virgin Lady, but were content with the Concubine, or Whore. Having thus got her, they force and raviſh her to Death, and gave her too much of what ſhe had liked but too well before. The *Levite* riſes in the Morning, without ſeeming to know any Thing that happened in the Night; he found his Concubine lying at the Door, he calls to her to riſe, and tells her he was going, but ſhe makes no Anſwer, and he ſoon ſaw that ſhe was dead, and was thereupon told what had happened in the Night. He takes her up dead, carries home the Carcaſs,

cuts

cuts her in twelve Pieces, and ſends them, with the Story told in his own Way, thro' all the Tribes of *Iſrael*. The People are hereupon inraged, they aſſemble as one Man, they vow Revenge, and reſolve upon the Deſtruction of the whole Tribe, without Satisfaction given. The *Levite* is called and examined, and his Report taken, without any farther Inquiry. They ſend to *Gibeah* of *Benjamin*, demanding the Criminals, on Pain of the utter Deſtruction and Extirpation of the Tribe without Mercy. The *Benjamites* refuſe to deliver up any of their Citizens, as nothing could be charged on any particular Perſons. Upon this they conſulted the Oracle, by whoſe Advice the War was reſolved upon. The other Tribes, tho' ten to one in Number, were repulſed and routed two Days ſucceſſively, with the Loſs in both Battles of forty thouſand Men. They conſulted the Oracle again, and humbled themſelves for a whole Day. They are directed to renew the War, and promiſed Succeſs. They ſucceeded by a Stratagem of an Ambuſcade; having pretended a Flight as before, and drawn the Men of the City out of the Town, the Men lying in wait ſet the City on Fire, and at the ſame Time the Men of *Iſrael* returning upon them ſlew twenty-five thouſand that Day. And the next Day, returning from the Purſuit, they cut off the whole Tribe, Men, Women and Children,

excepting ſix hundred Men who had ſaved themſelves by eſcaping to the Mountains. In this Outrage they had ſpared no Women that could make Wives for the ſix hundred Men which happened to eſcape of the whole Tribe. The Tribe of *Benjamin*, about forty Years after the *Exodus*, or a little before their Entrance into *Canaan*, had been numbered at forty-five thouſand ſix hundred Men, from twenty to ſixty; therefore, the Number of Souls, Men, Women and Children, could not have been leſs than two hundred and fifty thouſand: And as this War happened ſeventy or eighty Years after, the Number of Souls in the whole Tribe cannot be ſuppoſed to have decreaſed. The other Tribes in this War loſt forty thouſand Men in two Battles, wherein they were routed, tho' they had brought together four hundred thouſand Men for the Deſtruction of this one ſingle Tribe. And, therefore, upon a moderate Computation, taking the Story as it lies, we muſt ſuppoſe, that not leſs than three hundred thouſand Lives or Souls were ſacrificed upon this Quarrel, relating to a *Levite* and his Whore. But no ſooner was Vengeance executed, and the Rage a little abated, but the *Iſraelites* began to repent; they are ſtruck with Remorſe and Shame, they humble themſelves before the Lord, and expoſtulate with the Oracle or High Prieſt why this was ſuffered, or how it came about, that a whole

whole Tribe muſt periſh out of *Iſrael.* They had all made a ſolemn Oath under a Curſe, that no Man ſhould give his Daughter as a Wife to a *Benjamite*, and they had not ſpar'd a Woman of that Tribe. And now let us ſee how one Wickedneſs brought on another, and what Methods they took to evade the Oath. The firſt Contrivance was, to deſtroy a Town who had not involv'd themſelves in the ſame Difficulties, or been any ways concerned in this moſt unrighteous Effuſion of Blood. Now they found, upon Enquiry, that the Town of *Jabeſh Gilead* had ſent no Succours to this bloody Slaughter, and therefore they ſelected twelve thouſand choſen Men to go up and put the Town, Men, Women and Children to the Sword, only ſparing ſuch Virgins as were ripe for Marriage, and that might make Wives for the ſix hundred *Benjamites:* But of theſe they found but four hundred in the whole City. And, therefore, two hundred Maids were ſtill wanting, and they had no other Town or City to deſtroy, which ſtill put them to farther Shifts, and ſet them upon this Contrivance: The Daughters, Virgins, or young Ladies of *Shiloh*, had an annual Feaſt, in which they uſed to dance in the Fields; and during this Feſtival, the two hundred Men of *Benjamin*, who yet lacked Wives, were ordered to lie in wait, and every Man to catch a Wife among theſe Maids, ſuch as he liked beſt. And thus

they furniſhed ſix hundred Men with Wives, by adding one Wickedneſs to another, and finiſhing the moſt perfect Piece of Malice, Revenge and Villainy, in the Name of the Lord. And the *Hebrew* Hiſtorian was ſo conſcious of the moral Wickedneſs and Iniquity of all this, that he concludes the Story with theſe remarkable Words: *In thoſe Days there was no King in* Iſrael, *but every Man did that which was good in his Eyes.* But he ſeems to have forgot what he had juſt before told us, that there was a High Prieſt in *Iſrael* at that Time, as the living Oracle of God, even *Phinehas* the Grandſon of *Aaron*; and that nothing had been done in this whole Affair, but under his Council and Direction.

Now, it is evident here, that the Oracle was neither infallible nor impeccable; ſo far from it, that he encouraged and prompted the People to the moſt bloody and cruel Outrage that had ever been known or heard of; and an Injury done to a ſingle *Levite* was thought fit to be revenged, by cutting off a whole Tribe, Root and Branch, without any Regard to natural Juſtice, or the leaſt Bowels of Mercy and Compaſſion. How this drunken *Levite* and his Whore behaved themſelves, with what Decency and Civility on their coming into the City, is not ſaid: But this is plain, that they had raiſed a Mob about them which had like to have done more Miſchief. And when the whole Mob

of

of a Town was up in the Middle of the Night, it must have been impossible to have charged any Mischief done upon particular Persons, or that the Magistrates of *Gibeah* should give up the Rioters as demanded by the other Tribes, and by the High Priest. But the Historian knew very well, that this Affair would not bear a particular Relation as to the Occasion and Circumstances which made such an Uproar in *Gibeah*; tho' from what he hath said, one may easily guess at the true Grounds of this popular Outrage. But from this Time the Oracle fell into Disgrace, since we hear no more of it for above three hundred Years, or till the Days of *David*. And tho' this Prince, while he was under his Difficulties and Distresses, consulted this priestly Oracle three or four Times, yet when he came to be settled in the Kingdom, we hear no more of it, nor do we ever find it mentioned, consulted, or regarded after.

It is very plain, from the History itself, that the Credit of this Oracle sunk, and declined with the Reputation of the Priests, who, by the Time of *Samuel*, were intirely fallen off from their original Institution of Learning and Sobriety, and degenerated into the grossest State of Ignorance and Vice; insomuch that by their scandalous Behaviour in the Days of *Eli* and *Samuel*, they were perfectly scorned and despised by the meanest of the People. *Samuel*,

Samuel, therefore, ſaw the Neceſſity of ſetting up a new Inſtitution or Order of Men, that might reſtore Learning and Virtue, keep the People to the moral Law, and reſtrain the Vices both of the Prieſts and People: And this was the prophetick Order, or liberal Society, for which he eſtabliſhed a Shcool, or founded an Academy at *Naioth*. Here thoſe who were thought fit to be devoted to Learning, Study and Retirement, were brought up and inſtructed in all the Wiſdom and Knowledge of that Age, and ſo much of it as *Samuel* could retrieve from its antient Ruins. They here ſtudy'd Hiſtory, Rhetorick, Poetry, and the Knowledge of Nature; but above all Moral Philoſophy, or the Knowledge of God, Providence, and human Nature; which by the Antients was emphatically, and by way of Eminence, call'd *Wiſdom*, and eſteem'd as the chief Part of human Knowledge and Learning. The moral Rules and Laws to be obſery'd in this Society were very ſtrict and ſevere; they were to live in a low, abſtemious Way, retired from the World, without Ambition or Avarice, and wholly devoted to Contemplation and Study. They were to exemplify as well as preach the moſt perfect Righteouſneſs and rigid Virtue, and to rebuke and correct Vice where-ever they found it, without the leaſt Reſpect of Perſons, or Regard to any Dignities or Diſtinctions in Life. They were to denounce

denounce the Judgments of God againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs whatever, and to deal herein as freely and as home with the Prince as with the Slave. They were never to involve themſelves in ſecular Affairs, to puſh at Fortune, or to make any great Figure or ſplendid Appearance in the World, but to eat, drink and clothe in the loweſt, ſimpleſt and moſt moderate Way. Now this was certainly a moſt wiſe and excellent Conſtitution, and ſuch an Example in the Preachers of Righteouſneſs muſt needs give their moral Diſcourſes of God and Providence, and their Repreſentations of Nature, the greater Weight and Influence with the People. And ſuch an Order or Society muſt, doubtleſs, have gone farther in reforming the Nation, had not the Prieſts before this plunged the People into ſuch a Depth of Ignorance, Superſtition and Vice, that the Prophets, with all their Art, Application and Addreſs, were never able to recover them out of it: But, inſtead of this, turned Prophecy itſelf into Superſtition, and perſecuted even to Death all the Prophets that would not flatter and hold them up in it: Theſe Prophets, by their abſolute Retirement, and Devotedneſs to Study and Contemplation, under the ſtricteſt Regimen of Sobriety and Temperance, acquired ſuch high Degrees of Knowledge, both natural and moral, above the Vulgar, that the common People look'd upon them, as wholly

wholly miraculous and ſupernatural, and believ'd they had an immediate and free Converſation with God, Angels, and departed Souls, from whom they were ſuppoſed to receive all their ſuperior Knowledge and Intelligence. The Populace thought they knew even the very Hearts of Men, or whatever could be done under the cloſeſt Secrecy. But this popular Conceit expoſed theſe antient Sages to great Troubles and Perſecutions from the groſs, ignorant Multitude, who minding their Fate, more than their Duty, expected to know from them all that ſhould befal them in the Courſe of Providence, whether Good or Evil. Upon this ſuperſtitious Notion, inſtead of *Preachers of Righteouſneſs*, they would have made their Prophets *Fortune-Tellers*, as the moſt important Buſineſs they had for them. The proper Buſineſs of the Prophets, and the Deſign of their Inſtitution and Order, was to preach moral Truth and Righteouſneſs; to keep the People to the moral Law, and bring them to Repentance, as the neceſſary Means of their Happineſs and Safety, and the only Condition of divine Favour. The Prophets were to declare Good or Evil from God, and to pronounce his Promiſes or Threatnings, Mercies or Judgments, in Conſequence of the People's moral Conduct, and as they ſhould prepare and diſpoſe themſelves, either for one or the other,

ther. When they ſaw any Tendency or Diſpoſition in the People towards Repentance and Reformation, they declared Good to them, but otherwiſe Evil; as God was certainly the Rewarder of Virtue, and Puniſher of Vice. And this was, undoubtedly, the Nature and Deſign of the prophetick Order and Office. But this moſt ſtupid Generation always underſtood the Matter otherwiſe, and ſtill expected Declarations of Good, and certain national Deliverance, from the Principles of Preordination and abſolute Decrees in their Favour, and which they expected from God in Conſequence of his Covenant with *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, which they underſtood as an abſolute Promiſe or Decree. The Prophets could never beat them out of this; and to eſcape the popular Fury, were often obliged to humour them in it, and to deliver many Promiſes and Declarations of Good to the Nation, in abſolute Terms, which were plainly intended as conditional. And, therefore, as often as they pronounc'd any Judgments from God, or impending Calamity for the Sins of the Nation, they always promiſed a future Deliverance, in which Repentance, and national Reformation, was always preſuppoſed, tho' often as a Subintelligitur, and not expreſs'd. And thus they deceived themſelves from Time to Time, and ſtill grew worſe and worſe

in

in Expectation of a national Deliverance upon their own predeſtinarian Principles, till at length divine Patience being quite worn out, they were finally given up, as incorrigible, and abſolutely deſtroy'd and diſſolv'd as a Nation or People.

Theoph. You ſeem here to be overthrowing an Opinion, in which almoſt all Chriſtians have agreed with the whole *Jewiſh* Nation; that their Prophecies, relating to their final Deliverance and Reſtoration to their antient Kingdom, Proſperity, and Independency, were abſolute Predictions of what muſt certainly come to paſs. And if this be not ſo, I cannot ſee how to account for the Truth and Sincerity of moſt of the Prophets, for upon any other Suppoſition it ſeems plain, that either the Prophets were deceiv'd themſelves, or intended to impoſe on the People, and buoy them up in a falſe Hope and groundleſs Expectation.

Philal. There are many Inſtances, which might ſoon be produced, in which the Prophets deliver themſelves in abſolute Terms, as to Things future, while a Condition muſt neceſſarily be ſuppoſed and underſtood, particularly the Perpetuity, and uninterrupted Succeſſion of the Crown or Kingdom of *Iſrael* in the Houſe of *David*, which was promiſed by *Nathan* the Prophet in the moſt abſolute Terms; and in which Senſe *David* himſelf plainly underſtood it. And yet 'tis certain,

certain, that this was a conditional Promiſe, only on Suppoſition that *David* and his Succeſſors ſhould render themſelves worthy of it; becauſe the Kingdom of *Iſrael* revolted from the Houſe of *David* immediately upon the Death of *Solomon*, and hath never been reſtored ſince. And why then ſhould you think, that all the after Promiſes of a Reſtoration of the Kingdom to his Family by a Meſſiah, were any more abſolute, than the Promiſe to *David* of Continuance of it, without any ſuch Interruption? Eſpecially ſince I have, as I think, fully prov'd, that the original Promiſe made to *Abraham* and his Seed, was ſtrictly and properly a Covenant or conditional Grant, and that it was never fulfill'd or made good in the abſolute Senſe. And beſides, what are the Chriſtians a doing while they maintain this abſolute Senſe of theſe Propheſyings, but upholding the *Jews* in their antient Superſtition, and ſupporting the Principles of Fataliſm and Predeſtination againſt the Nature and Condition of free Agency, and all the rational Methods of God's moral Government? In ſhort, *Theophanes*, if Providence hath not ſufficiently explain'd itſelf already as to theſe Matters, I think we can learn nothing from Providence at all.

As to your great and main Objection relating to the Truth and Sincerity of the Prophets, I think, I had in great Meaſure obviated

ated it before, by obſerving, that the Prophets were under a Neceſſity, in this and many other Caſes, of accommodating themſelves to the Paſſions, Prejudices, and rooted Superſtition of the Nation, or People to whom they were ſent. And had they not made ſome ſuch prudential Allowances, or ſeeming Conceſſions, they could have done no Good at all, and ſcarce any one of them would have been ſuffered to live.

Theoph. I muſt own, that your Argument ſeems pretty ſtrong, and that you have made a very good, prudential Excuſe for the Prophets; ſuppoſing the Matter to be as you apprehend it. The Prophets, it ſeems, could not always venture to ſpeak out the plain Truth, and when that was the Caſe, they accommodated themſelves a little, as to their Manner of Expreſſion, to the vulgar Superſtition and Prejudices, and went as far as they dared. But then, I hope, you will allow, that theſe Prophets were not barely Philoſophers and Moraliſts; but that they had in ſome Caſes, at leaſt, the Knowledge of Things future communicated to them in a ſupernatural Way.

Philal. No Doubt but Men of their Character, in their Receſs from the Buſineſs and Pleaſures of the World, free from Avarice or Ambition, and who nicely obſerv'd the Conduct of Providence, and the various Turns and Revolutions of States and King-

doms in their very Beginnings and firſt Occaſions; could know more, and ſee farther than others, who were immerſed in Pleaſure or Buſineſs, and whoſe Luſts and Appetites blinded them, and kept them from ſeeing Things, that were neareſt at Hand. And this might enable the Prophets, upon rational Principles, and the common Methods of Providence, to give a very near Gueſs at what would happen, eſpecially, as to the great Changes and Turns of Nations and Governments.

The Prophets, when they ſtruck at future Events, were not very particular and circumſtantial, as to Time, Place, Perſons, *&c.* They generally deliver theſe Preſages in very dark and obſcure Terms, and only relate, for the moſt Part, their Dreams and Viſions of the Night, the Interpretation of which is extremely difficult, and may be apply'd to a thouſand different Events from that Time to this, and ſo on to the End of the World; as all our modern Prophets or Interpreters of Prophecy have ſufficiently prov'd. But by this Means the antient Prophets in great Meaſure ſaved themſelves, and were not often accountable for Particulars in Futurity, while they were ſoothing the ſuperſtitious People with an imaginary Knowledge of what was to come. But whenever they propheſied Evil, and it came to paſs, they were hated and perſecuted for it; though

they foretold nothing, but what was imminent, and which every Man, with Eyes in his Head, muſt have foreſeen as unavoidable. As in the Caſe of *Jeremiah* before the *Babyloniſh* Captivity, and in which they had no poſſible Way, in human Appearance, of reſiſting the *Chaldeans:* Yet they ſtill expected a miraculous Deliverance in Spite of all their Wickedneſs, which had ripened them for Deſtruction. And, therefore, they perſecuted this Prophet with the utmoſt Malice and Revenge, becauſe he would have ſaved them, and prevented that Deſolation, by ſubmitting to ſo powerful and irreſiſtible an Enemy; and would have put him to Death, had not the *Babylonians* protected him. The *Aſſyrian* Conqueſt and Captivity had been foretold, or rather ſeen in the ſame Manner, and might have been prevented, and the Country ſpared, had the People been capable of common Prudence, or paid the leaſt Regard to Providence. But they were far above this, and ſtill aſſured themſelves, that God would protect and ſave them for the Sake of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, and that he would always deliver them for his Covenant's Sake, as he had done out of *Egypt*.

'Tis certain, that the Treatment the Prophets met with in *Iſrael*, was enough to drive them out of their Wits, or to make them abſolutely deſpair of ever ſerving ſo wretched

and

and wicked a Nation. And, indeed, the Event was, that they had ſo long taught the Prophets what they ought to propheſy, and what Doctrines they muſt preach, till at length no Prophet could live among them. And nothing but Experience, and the Miſeries they ſuffered for their Pride, Obſtinacy, and Superſtition, could ever have given them the leaſt Notion of the Neceſſity of Obedience and Submiſſion to any other Nation. And it was this Humour, and predeſtinarian Faith prevailing again at laſt againſt the *Romans*, which prov'd their final and utter Deſtruction, as a diſtinct Nation.

But beſides this groſs Superſtition and *Egyptianiz'd* Temper and Genius of the People, there were ſeveral other Cauſes, which concurr'd gradually to leſſen the Credit, and at laſt wholly to exterminate this prophetick Order. For, in the firſt Place, the Kings of *Iſrael* had a natural, hereditary Averſion to the Prophets from their firſt Foundation in the Time of *Samuel*, as knowing that one great Deſign of inſtituting this Order, was to curb and reſtrain the regal Power, and particularly to cut off the Inheritance from *Iſrael*, where the royal Power began, and to intail the Crown in the Tribe of *Judah*.

When *Samuel* could no longer ſtem the Torrent, but the People would needs have a King after the Manner of the other Nations;

after having entered his Proteſt againſt it, he ſubmitted to the popular Cry, and anointed them a King, *Saul* the Son of *Kiſh*, of the Tribe of *Benjamin*; a young Man of uncommon Strength and Stature, of great Courage, and at that Time, of untainted Virtue. This Prophet ſaw, for twenty Years before this, that the national Bent and Bias was for a King, and that the People would not be long managed without one. He had found, that moſt of the Kings in his Time, and for many Ages before, had prov'd Tyrants, and invaded the natural Rights and Properties of their Subjects, and he expected nothing elſe in *Iſrael* from the regal Power; and, therefore, before he anointed *Saul*, he repreſented to the People, in a very moving Oration, what their Kings would do, and how little they would gain by ſuch a Government. As ſoon, therefore, as *Samuel* ſaw the Revolution, which muſt ſoon happen in the State, he inſtituted this Academick Order of Prophets, who by their Weight and Influence with the People, were to moderate and reſtrain the Power of the Kings, and at the ſame Time, keep the Princes and People too, within the Boundaries of the Moral Law. *Samuel*, to ſilence the Clamours, and comply with the Importunity of the People, having anointed *Saul* King, preſently ſent him home again, where he lived a private, retired Life, as before, for at leaſt twenty Years,

Years, with only the Name or Title, without the State or Dignity of a King. And during this Time, the Prophet governed all, as he had done from the Death of *Eli*, and *Saul* in Effect obey'd him, having only the Name without the Power. About twenty Years after *Saul* had been anointed, a moſt terrible and threatening War broke out with the *Ammonites*, who had beſieged *Jabeſh Gilead*, and vow'd their Deſtruction, for they would ſpare them even as Slaves, but on Condition of putting out their right Eyes. Under this Extremity, the Town ſend to *Saul*, begging that he would put himſelf at the Head of an Army, and come to their Aſſiſtance. Theſe Meſſengers found the King at Plow with his Oxen in the Fields. The King hereupon reſolv'd to exert himſelf, he cuts two Yoke of Oxen in Pieces, ſends them thro' the ſeveral Tribes, requiring them to meet him by the Morning, on Penalty of having their own Oxen thus cut in Pieces. But this Summons was in *Samuel*'s Name, as well as his own; for he dared not yet exerciſe any Act of Power independent of the Prophet. The People meet him accordingly. The *Ammonites* are entirely routed, and the Country delivered. Upon this great Deliverance, the People cry'd out, as one Man, that *Saul* ſhould be really King, and not only in Name; that he ſhould take upon him the State and Dignity of his Charac-

ter, and that they would cut in Pieces all that ſhould oppoſe it. *Samuel* being home preſs'd, and under a plain Neceſſity, propoſed to go up to *Gilgal*, and renew the Kingdom, where *Saul* was inveſted with the real State, Power, and Grandeur of a King independent of the Prophet. They had now two thouſand Men to be always about him, as his conſtant Guards, and *Jonathan* the Prince, one thouſand. That this Renewal of the Kingdom muſt have been not leſs than twenty Years after *Saul* had been firſt anointed, is plain, ſince *Saul*, when firſt anointed, was but a young Man, as the Text tells us, and *Joſephus* ſaith he was then thirty; and, therefore, *Jonathan* then could be but a Child. But now *Jonathan* was grown up an expert Soldier, and the chief Captain under the King. From the Death of *Eli* to this Time, *Samuel* had exerciſed all Power, both Civil and Eccleſiaſtical, and had taken upon him the High Prieſthood, as is plain from the Hiſtory; and this could not have been leſs than forty Years: For *Samuel* at the Death of *Eli* was very young, and he tells the People upon this Occaſion, that he had gone in and out before them from his Youth, but that he was now old and grey-headed.

Saul being thus veſted with the whole Power of the Kingdom, depoſed *Samuel* from the High Prieſthood, which, indeed, he

he had but uſurped againſt the fundamental Conſtitution of *Moſes*. And the King now put in *Ahia*, who was the right Heir from *Eli*, and his Grandſon. But this highly provoked and exaſperated the Prophet, that from this Time he projected the Ruin of *Saul* and his Family, and was reſolv'd to convince the King, that he could unmake as well as make him, and that no King of *Iſrael* muſt ever pretend to reign independent of the prophetick Order. *Samuel* now declares, that the Lord repented that he had made *Saul* King of *Iſrael*, i. e. the Prophet himſelf repented it; for it would be moſt abſurd and ſenſeleſs to imagine, that God did not know, when *Saul* was made King, what would happen; but it is plain, that *Samuel* did not know.

Soon after *Saul* had been thus eſtabliſh'd in the Kingdom, or within two Years, the *Philiſtines* invaded the Land, and reduced them to the laſt Extremity; inſomuch, that there was not a Smith left in *Iſrael* to ſharpen their Swords and Spears. But under this common Calamity the Father and Founder of the Prophets, (notwithſtanding the Excellency and Wiſdom of his firſt Inſtitution) having reſolv'd upon a perſonal Revenge againſt this King and his Family, ſeems to have had but little Compaſſion for his Country. *Delenda eſt Carthago*, was now the Maxim, and *Saul* and his Family muſt be

now rooted out, and ſet aſide, whatever might be the Conſequences. But by almoſt a Miracle of Providence, *Saul*, and *Jonathan* his Son, conquers the *Philiſtines*, clears the Country of them, and ſettles the Nation in Peace, in Spite of all the Oppoſition of *Samuel*, and the Prophets.

In the Beginning of this War there was a great Deſertion of the *Hebrews* to the *Philiſtines*, who had brought up againſt *Iſrael* thirty thouſand Chariots, ſix thouſand Horſe, and People as the Sand of the Sea. In this Battle the *Philiſtines* gain'd a complete Victory; and of the *Iſraelites*, ſuch as eſcaped, ſome deſerted to the Enemy, others hid themſelves, and the reſt fled over *Jordan*. *Saul* himſelf was not in this Battle; but waited at *Gilgal* ſeven Days for *Samuel*, who had promiſed to come to him. But the Prophet ſeems to have look'd upon this Devaſtation of his Country, not only with Indifferency, but Pleaſure, as thinking this was the Time in which God would deſtroy and ſet aſide the King. Theſe ſeven Days being out, and the Army growing mutinous and deſerting, the King order'd Sacrifices of Burnt-Offerings and Peace-Offerings to implore the Divine Protection againſt ſo formidable an Enemy, and that God would diſpoſe the Prophet to come to him, and give him his Advice under ſuch an Exigence. As ſoon as *Saul* had done this, *Samuel*, who had laid by

by as unconcerned before, came and charged the King with a great Act of Wickedneſs and Diſobedience, as having invaded the Prieſtly Office, for which he declared in the Name of the Lord, that the King had forfeited his Crown and Kingdom. And notwithſtanding all the Beſeechings and Intreaties of the King, and all the Repreſentations he could make of the Diſtreſs he was under, the Deſertion of the Army, and the impending Ruin of the Country, thro' the Prophet's own Delay; yet this had now no Manner of Effect upon the holy Man; but he left the King, with a Reſolution never to ſee his Face more. The Prophet had, perhaps, now forgot that he himſelf had uſurped the High Prieſt's Office for about forty Years, contrary to the Law of God, by *Moſes*. But this was no Wonder in a Man, who could bring God himſelf to Repentance, and charge all his own Follies, and Want of Foreſight, upon the Almighty. But whatever *Samuel* might imagine, this was not the Time for *Saul*'s Overthrow. God was more merciful to the Nation, and tho' the King, by the Prophet's Management, had now but ſix hundred Men of the Army left with him, yet by a Miracle of Providence, he and the Prince intirely routed the *Philiſtines*, and clear'd the Country of them. After which the King went on for many Years, conquering with an high Hand, till he ſubdu'd all

all their Enemies, and ſettled the Country in Peace, perhaps to the great Mortification of this Prophet.

Samuel now ſeeing, that all his Stratagems hitherto had prov'd ineffectual, and that *Saul* was invincible in the Field, thought of another Project, whereby to ruin him. He ſent him againſt the *Amalekites*, as by an expreſs Command from God. He was to deſtroy *Amalek* Root and Branch from the oldeſt Man to the ſucking Child, without ſparing one Soul. He was likewiſe to deſtroy all the Sheep and Cattle, without reſerving any Thing in the Country, or leaving any Plunder or Booty to the Soldiers. The King undertakes this bloody Commiſſion, and executes the moſt cruel and inhuman Part of it, by deſtroying all the Inhabitants, Men, Women, and Children; only he brought the King alive, and gave the Booty of Sheep and Cattle to the Army. It is evident here, that this was a Plot laid by the Prophet for the King's Deſtruction: For if he had not given the Soldiers the Booty or Plunder of the conquer'd Country, the whole Army would have mutiny'd and deſerted, ſince this is what they had never been deny'd in all their Wars; and then the King muſt have fallen a Sacrifice to the diſappointed and enraged Soldiery, which was, doubtleſs, what the Prophet intended. And, therefore, being diſappointed here, he had

had no longer Patience, but hews *Agag* the King in Pieces before the Lord; and having denounced the Ruin of *Saul* and his Family before all the People, he went off, and privately anointed *David*. After this, without any Suſpicion of Treaſon or Rebellion, he managed Matters ſo as to bring *David* into *Saul*'s Family, where he marry'd the King's Daughter, ingratiates himſelf with the Prince, and obtained, by his Art and Addreſs, the higheſt Honours at Court, till every Thing was ripe for the Rebellion. I forbear here to make any farther Remarks upon this Affair, as the Story ſpeaks itſelf. It is plain enough, ſince it happened to ſucceed, and all was done in the Name of the Lord. But this original Quarrel, between the King and the Prophets, laid the Foundation of all the inteſtine Broils, Miſeries and Calamities which in after Ages terminated in the Ruin of the Country, and the Extirpation both of the Kings and Prophets, who by their mutual Jealouſies and Oppoſitions continually weakened, and at laſt deſtroyed each other.

The Crown having been cut off from *Iſrael*, and entailed upon *Judah*, by a long Train of Falſhoods, Perjuries, Diſſimulations, Ingratitude, Treaſon, and at laſt open Rebellion; and *David* having at laſt carried his Point, and ſettled himſelf in the Kingdom, in Oppoſition to all his former Vows and Proteſtations of Loyalty, as having no Views

to

to the Crown, this could not be thought to be the Work of God, tho' it had been all colour'd over with a Pretence of divine Authority. As *David* had been ſettled in the Kingdom, by the Intereſt of the Prophets, he took care to engage the Prieſts on his Side too. And to effect this, he at laſt doubled their Revenues, as they had been ſettled by *Moſes*, and obliged all the People to bring their Sacrifices to *Jeruſalem*, and to offer no where elſe; ſo that this Prince made himſelf the Darling, and even Idol, both of the Prophets and Prieſts. But the other Tribes were not able to bear the Servitude, and waited but for a fair Opportunity to break the Yoke of *Judah*, and ſet up for their antient Independency. And this they found an Occaſion for in the next Reign; for *Solomon* not going upon his Father's Principles and Maxims of Government, loſt the Intereſt both of the Prieſts and Prophets.

Solomon having thoroughly eſtabliſhed himſelf in the Kingdom, took a great Number of Wives and Concubines from all the Nations round about, and thereby raiſed the largeſt and fineſt Seraglio that had ever been known, and this for the Majeſty and Grandeur of the Thing, according to the Opinion and Cuſtom of thoſe Eaſtern Nations. At the ſame Time, he ſettled firm Alliances with *Egypt*, *Tyre*, and the chief neighbouring

ing Princes, as the beſt Security of his Kingdom. Having done this, he granted a general Indulgence or Toleration for all Religions, to encourage Strangers to come and ſettle in the Country under his Protection, and by a Sort of Naturalization. To this Purpoſe, he allow'd ſeparate Places of Worſhip in ſeveral Parts of *Paleſtine*, where People of all Nations and Religions might ſacrifice in their own Way, and worſhip God by the Mediation and Interceſſion of their own Demi-Gods or ſubordinate Deities. Nor did this great Prince oblige his own Subjects to bring all their Sacrifices to the Temple; but indulged them in ſetting up ſeveral ſeparate Places of Worſhip, where they might offer their Sacrifices to the true God in their own Way, or according to the Law, but without ſo much Trouble or Expence. Now this was certainly true Policy, and no more than a Piece of natural Juſtice. But then it ſo highly provok'd both the Prophets and Prieſts, that *Solomon* could never have reigned ſo long, and died in Peace, had it not been for his foreign Alliances. The Prieſts cry'd out againſt it as a great Wickedneſs, ſince it cut them off from the greateſt Part of their Revenues ariſing from their Sacrifices and Abſolutions, and encouraged the People to ſerve God without them. And the Prophets thought it an open and daring Violation of the Laws, and an Affront offered to God

himſelf, to protect and encourage any Religion or Method of Worſhip in that Country, but what *Moſes* had eſtabliſh'd. And, therefore, they denounced the Judgments of God againſt the King, and no leſs than the Revolt of his Kingdom, though it does not appear that *Solomon* worſhipped any but the true God, in the legal Way, himſelf; yet his tolerating thoſe who did, was thought the ſame Thing, and tolerating Idolatry in that Country, or ſuffering any other Religion, but what the Law had eſtabliſh'd, was reckon'd Idolatry; and it was upon this Foot, that the Prophets charged Idolatry upon *Solomon*, and moſt of the other Kings of *Iſrael* after him, for maintaining the ſame Indulgence, Toleration, or Liberty of Conſcience. Upon the Death of *Solomon*, the ten Tribes of *Iſrael* revolted, as not being able any longer to bear the Yoke of *Judah*, and not thinking it their Intereſt to recal or revoke the Toleration, which *Solomon* had granted, and which the Prieſts and Prophets had ſo much declaim'd againſt. But *Solomon* being dead, his Alliances were broken, and the Kingdom not only rent into two, but engaged in a moſt bloody and deſtructive Civil War, for two hundred and ſixty Years, till the Captivity and utter Extirpation of *Iſrael*. Within four Years after this Diviſion of the Kingdom the *Egyptians* came up to *Judah*, rifled the Temple, and carried away

away all the Gold, Silver, and vaſt Treaſures, which *David* and *Solomon* had been amaſſing during their whole Reigns. And thus ended all the Pride and Glory of that ſtately Structure, which at that Time, for its Riches and Beauty, muſt have been the Wonder of the World.

Solomon's Toleration had encouraged great Numbers of Prieſts and People from other Countries to come and ſettle in *Paleſtine*, where they had been protected, and muſt have added very much to the Strength and Riches of the Country: But after the Death of that great and wiſe Prince, this was thought a Wickedneſs no longer to be born. And, therefore, whenever they had got a King to their Purpoſe, they ſet him to deſtroying all the Prieſts and Worſhippers of *Baal*, whether Natives or Foreigners, and by this Means they weakened and exhauſted the Country, and made themſelves an eaſy Prey to the Nations round about them, with whom they broke all their Alliances, as not thinking it lawful to maintain any Peace or Friendſhip with Idolators. Such was the perſecuting Zeal of theſe holy Men, and their miſtaken Notions of Religion and Conſcience. Nay every King and Royal Family, who could not come into theſe Meaſures, were mark'd out for Deſtruction, and the moſt formidable and bloody Rebellions raiſed againſt them for encouraging and ſup-

porting Idolatry, *i. e.* for not deſtroying and rooting out Idolators by Fire and Sword. And by theſe religious Wars and miſtaken Zeal for the Lord, both Kings and Prophets were at laſt exterminated, and the whole Nation perfectly enſlaved. This was, doubtleſs, one chief Reaſon that the Prophets loſt Ground continually, and declined in their Credit and Intereſt with the Kings of *Iſrael* and *Judah*, that very few of them cared to be engaged in ſuch bloody Work, as deſtroying Men on the Account of Religion and Conſcience. As, on the other Hand, the Prieſts generally hated them, for declaiming againſt them, and endeavouring to keep the People to the moral Law, and take them off from their ſuperſtitious Dependence upon ſuch Sacrifices and Abſolutions, by which the Prieſts drew in the greater Part of their Revenues. And herein the People were generally in the Intereſt of the Prieſts, as they found it much more difficult to quit their Vices, and practiſe Righteouſneſs, than to obſerve the ceremonial Law, and thereby obtain Abſolution from their ghoſtly Fathers.

But, beſides all this, the Prophets themſelves, many of them, degenerated in Time from the Strictneſs and Purity of their firſt Inſtitution; and particularly they pretended too much to the Knowledge of Futurity. And by this Means they ſometimes propheſy'd Lies in the Name of the Lord, as four hundred

hundred of them did at once in the Caſe of *Ahab*. And then, as this Order grew at laſt exceeding numerous, ſo many idle Hands muſt have been a Burden to the State, which might put them, in their recluſe Way of living, to ſome Shifts for a Maintenance. And as the People had a ſtrong Paſſion for the Knowledge of Futurity, with Regard both to the Fate of private Perſons, and of the Nation in general, and as they expected the Solution of all ſuch Queſtions from the Prophets, it is not impoſſible but they might vie with one another, and carry thoſe Pretenſions too high, as a Means of getting Money. And this muſt often put them upon contriving general and doubtful Anſwers to ſave their Credit; for it cannot be ſuppoſed, that they had always an Angel, or familiar Spirit at hand, to enable them to be very particular and circumſtantial in revealing ſuch Secrets. It is evident, in the Caſe of *Samuel* and *Saul*, that the Prophets, at their firſt Inſtitution, were ſuppoſed to be let into all Secrets; and it is not unlikely, but *Samuel* might here have the beſt Reaſon in the World to know what had betided the Aſſes. There are likewiſe ſeveral Inſtances to be given, in which the Prophets brought about their own Predictions, by accompliſhing, in a natural Way, what they had reſolv'd upon before. The Method taken by *Samuel* to ſet aſide *Saul* and his Family,

with the Grounds and Reaſons of it has been partly conſidered already. And it cannot be doubted, but the ſame Treachery, Plotting, and Contrivance muſt, under the ſame or like Circumſtances, have had the ſame Effect in any other Caſe.

The Management of the Prophet *Eliſha* with *Hazael*, the chief Captain of the King of *Syria*, is likewiſe remarkable to this Purpoſe. The Story is this; *Benhadad*, the King of *Syria*, in a dangerous Illneſs, *Eliſha* being then at *Damaſcus*, the King ſent his Servant, a chief Captain, to the Prophet, to enquire of him, whether he ſhould recover or not? *Hazael* took a Preſent of forty Camels Load of the richeſt Goods and Treaſures of *Syria*, and which was certainly a Bribe large enough for any Prince or Monarch then in the World. With this ſtrong Argument laid before the Prophet, he aſks him the Queſtion from the King his Maſter, whether he might recover of this Diſeaſe? The Prophet takes the Preſent, and bids *Hazael* go and tell the King, that he ſhould recover: But nevertheleſs, adds the Prophet, *The Lord hath ſhewed me, that he ſhall ſurely die.* This was a Hint between them two, and Intimation enough, that the Prophet did not deſign to be ungrateful for what he had taken of the Captain. After this, the Prophet looked ſtedfaſtly upon *Hazael*, and wept. *Hazael*, almoſt out of Countenance, aſked

the

the Meaning of this. Why, ſaith the Prophet, *Becauſe I know* [fear] *the Evil, which thou ſhalt do to the Children of* Iſrael; *for their ſtrong Cities ſhalt thou ſet on fire, their young Men ſhalt thou ſlay with the Sword, daſh their Infants againſt the Stones, and rend in Pieces their Women with Child.* *Hazael* not yet thoroughly entering into the Secret, ſtood aſtoniſhed at ſuch a Declaration from the Man of God. But the Prophet told him, that the Lord had ſhewed him, that he ſhould be King of *Aram.* And having taken his Vows and Proteſtations, that if that ſhould happen, he would favour *Iſrael*, the Prophet ſent him away, having given him ſufficient Inſtructions what he was to do. *Hazael* now goes home, and aſſures the King from the Prophet, that he would recover, or that his Diſeaſe was not mortal. But the next Morning finding him in a fair Way of Recovery, he took a thick Cloth dipt in Water, and ſpreading it upon his Face, ſuffocated the King, and then uſurp'd the Crown, and reign'd in his Stead. 'Tis plain, that *Eliſha* here put *Hazael* into a moſt effectual Way to obtain the Kingdom, in Hopes, that having been indebted to him for the Crown, he would favour his Country, and put an End to the War againſt *Iſrael.* But *Hazael* having ſufficiently paid the Prophet for his Advice, thought himſelf under no farther Obligations, and there-

fore forgot all his Promiſes, when he came to be King of *Syria*, and made good the Prophet's Predictions, as a juſt Reward for ſuch Counſel. And this ſhews after what Manner the Prophets ſometimes conſulted with God, and by what Means they accompliſh'd their own Prophecies. The Reader will find a full Account of this Matter in 2 *Kings*, Chapter viii.

Solomon having, as before-mentioned, highly provok'd the Prophets, by his tolerating Idolatry, theſe Politicians, upon the Death of the King, projected a Revolution in Favour of *Jeroboam*, not doubting but he would be governed by them, and deſtroy all Idolaters, if they ſhould give him the Crown. This *Jeroboam* was, at firſt, in great Favour with *Solomon*. He was a young Man of great Courage, Reſolution and Abilities, and the King obſerving his promiſing Genius had made him Superviſor of all his Works in the Houſe of *Joſeph*, or over the Tribes of *Ephraim* and *Manaſſeh*. *Ahijah* the Prophet met him one Day, and had a long Conference with him in the Fields. He laid before him, what had been intended and projected againſt *Solomon*, for his encouraging and tolerating Idolatry. He aſſured him, that the Kingdom of *Iſrael* was to be taken from the Houſe of *David*, as ſoon as *Solomon* died, and gave *Jeroboam* to underſtand, that he was the Man deſign'd

ſign'd for it, and that when he came to the Crown, if he would deſtroy and root out all Idols, and ſuffer none but the true Religion, as *David* had done, that his Kingdom over *Iſrael* ſhould be firmly eſtabliſhed. The Prophet having led *Jeroboam* into theſe Secrets and deep Deſigns of State, left him to conſider, and make his own Uſe of it. A Man of *Jeroboam*'s Courage, Ambition, and great Abilities, needed no farther Inſtructions; but as ſoon as he found the Diſpoſition of the Prophets, and what they had reſolved upon, he knew well enough how to play the Game, and act his proper Part towards accompliſhing the Prophecy. He immediately ſet upon Contrivances and Machinations againſt the King; but being diſcovered, he fled into *Egypt*, where he was protected till the Death of *Solomon*. And then returning, the Plot which had been laid long enough before, and ſufficiently concerted, took Effect. The ten Tribes of *Iſrael* revolted, and *Jeroboam* was made King of *Iſrael*. But never was any Set of Politicians more diſappointed. *Jeroboam*, when he came to the Crown, did not think fit to exhauſt his Kingdom, and break his Alliance with *Egypt*, by engaging in the bloody Work of rooting out Idolatry, and deſtroying Idolaters by Fire and Sword: So far from it, that he granted a larger Toleration than ever, and even indulged his own

Subjects, as well as Foreigners, to chuſe their own Religion, and worſhip God in what Manner they pleaſed. But this Liberty of Conſcience, and Piece of State Policy, ſo highly provok'd the Prophets, that utter Deſtruction was ſoon vow'd and reſolv'd upon againſt *Jeroboam*, and his whole Houſe. And this was effected within twenty four Years; for *Nadab*, the Son of *Jeroboam*, reign'd but two Years after the Death of his Father, before another Revolution was brought about in Favour of Religion: For *Baaſha* now conſpired againſt and ſlew him, and reign'd in his Stead. This King utterly deſtroy'd and cut off all the Houſe of *Jeroboam*, as the Prophet had foretold and determined. But he ſtill went on in the ſame Way of Idolatry, ſo that the Prophets got nothing by this Revolution. And, therefore, the Prophets ſent a Deputation to *Baaſha*, to let him know, that his Houſe was likewiſe doom'd to Deſtruction, and that he muſt expect the ſame Fate with *Jeroboam* and his Family; and this happened within two Years after the Death of *Baaſha*, when *Ella* his Son was murdered by his Servant *Zimri*, who uſurp'd the Crown, and reign'd but ſeven Days; and yet, in this ſhort Time he fulfilled the Prophecies, or executed the Vengeance of the Prophets againſt *Baaſha*, not leaving one of his Family, Relations, or Friends to piſs againſt the Wall. But as ſoon

ſoon as he committed this Outrage, *Omri* was ſet up againſt him by the People, who could not bear ſuch unexempled Barbarity, Treaſon and Murder. *Omri*, who had been the chief Captain of the Hoſt, being thus ſet up, and declared King by the Army, cloſely beſieged *Zimri* in *Tirzah*, and having taken the Town, forced him to retire into the Palace, where he ſet the Houſe on fire about him, and periſh'd in the Flames. And this, ſaith the Hiſtorian, 1 *Kings* xvi. 19. was *for the Sins, which he had ſinned in the Way of* Jeroboam, *who cauſed* Iſrael *to ſin.* But one would think he had done enough for ſeven Days in deſtroying, Root and Branch, all the former Royal Family, with their Friends and Adherents; tho' he had not fallen upon the idolatrous Prieſts and People in general, which he ought to have done in a religious War, and which was the main Thing, it ſeems, expected from him. This *Omri* was the Father of *Ahab*, and all this Slaughter and Blood-ſhed for Religion happened within forty-five Years after the Death of *Solomon*.

But after all this Struggle, when *Ahab* came to the Crown, the Prophets had loſt almoſt all their Intereſt, and were look'd upon as the principal Inſtruments of the Effuſion of ſo much Blood, and the cruel Devaſtations of their Country for almoſt ſixty Years paſt. *Ahab*, ſoon after his Acceſſion

ceſſion to the Crown, marry'd *Jezabel*, Daughter of *Eth-Baal*, King of *Sidon*. His Alliance with this idolatrous Family gave the Prophets great Offence, and not without Reaſon, for it was like to iſſue in the Extirpation of their whole Order, which was, perhaps, the Thing intended. Experience, by this Time, had evinced, that it was impoſſible for the regal Power, and prophetick Office, to ſubſiſt together; and, therefore, *Ahab* hoped to have put an End to this holy Order, and thereby have cut off the Occaſion of any more religious Wars. But herein he was miſtaken; for the Prophets had ſtill more Intereſt, and Influence with the People, than the Kings; as we ſhall now ſee.

Ahab had been ſufficiently convinced, by the Hiſtory and Experience of above two hundred Years back, that the Prophets would never ſubmit to the Toleration of any Religion, but their own, in that Country; and therefore, he ſeems to have formed a Deſign, and laid a Scheme, if poſſible, to root them out, and to eſtabliſh ſome other Religion more friendly and beneficent to Mankind, and that might not obſtruct his Alliances with other Nations. The King of *Zidon* was now a powerful Prince, and his Daughter *Jezabel* a Woman of great Policy and Contrivance, by whom he might execute his Deſigns, without ſeeming to be

directly engaged in it himself. *Jezabel*, therefore, the *Zidonian*, who was now Queen of *Israel*, laid a Scheme for the Destruction of the Lord's Prophets, and for which she seem'd to have had some Appearances of natural Justice. It is certain, that the Prophets of the Lord, as they were call'd, had greatly inflamed, divided and excited the People to Rebellion, and cut off one Royal Family after another, for above two hundred Years past, on Account of Religion. The great Wickedness charged upon the Kings of *Israel*, is their Toleration of Idolatry, or granting a Liberty of Conscience, both to Natives and Foreigners, for every Man to worship God in his own Way, either by the Mediation and Intercession of the living High Priests of *Israel*, or the dead Saints and canoniz'd Heroes of the heathen Nations, in Honour and Commemoration of whose Memories, the People had built Temples, erected Altars, and instituted Festivals. But here the Priests who managed the Festivals or Sacrifices to *Baal*, *Ashteroth*, *Moloch*, and other heathen, mediatorial Deities, had never offered any Violence or Coaction to compel People into their Way and Method of Worship, nor, so far as it appears, did they ever instigate the Kings of *Israel* to persecute their Subjects upon such Account. They only desired Liberty of Conscience themselves, and were willing to grant

grant the ſame to all others. Nor is there any Inſtance to be given throughout the whole Hiſtory, where any of the Kings charged with Idolatry uſed any Force or Violence to oblige any Body to worſhip the Calves, *Baal*, *Aſteroth*, &c. When the revolted Tribes under *Jeroboam* fell into the *Egyptian* Idolatry, and ſet up the mediatorial Gods, and Feſtivals of *Egypt*, great Numbers of them ſtill went up to *Jeruſalem* to worſhip God in the legal Way, of which *Tobit* was one. And they who choſe this, were not hinder'd, but left to their Liberty. So that the Crime charged upon the Kings, was not enforcing Idolatry by Law; but granting an Indulgence or Toleration to Idolators, and not deſtroying them by Fire and Sword, which was the religious Zeal of the Prophets, and their Concern for the Lord of Hoſts. But *Jezabel* thought this Method contrary to the Law of Nature and Nations; and, therefore, ſhe laid a Deſign for the Deſtruction and Extermination of theſe Prophets, as Enemies not only to their own Country, but to the common Peace and Tranquillity of the World. But ſhe found this impracticable, it being impoſſible to root out the Prophets while they had ſo much Intereſt, and the People were reſolved to protect them; and, therefore, when the Queen had cut off the greater Part of them, there were ſtill enough left, no leſs than

than four hundred, at the latter End of *Ahab*'s Reign, to conſpire and effect the Deſtruction of this King and his Family.

But *Elijah* had taken a full Revenge before for the Death of the Prophets, whom *Jezabel* had ſlain. A ſevere Famine had afflicted the Land for three Years, during which Time every Thing had been conſumed by a Drought, or Want of Rain. And this national Calamity is ſaid to have been procured and brought on by *Elijah*'s Prayers; which reduced the King to ſuch Diſtreſs, that after he had endeavoured to cut off this Prophet, as the Cauſe of ſuch a Calamity, he was forced at laſt to make his Court to him, and to beg his Intereſt and Aſſiſtance, before the Famine had quite deſtroy'd the Country. And accordingly Rain was procured, and four hundred and fifty of *Baal*'s Prieſts ſlain, as an Expiation for the Blood of the Prophets, whom *Jezabel* had put to Death before. But *Ahab* ſtill continued to tolerate Idolatry, and a War happening afterwards with the *Syrians*, four hundred of the Prophets, whom he conſulted, conſpired together to ſend him up to *Ramoth-Gilead*, that he might there fall in Battle, which took Effect, and the King was ſlain, though they had all aſſured him, in the Name of the Lord, that he ſhould gain the Victory, and return in Peace. After the Death of *Ahab*, his two Sons *Ahaziah*

ziah and *Jehoram* reign'd, the one two and the other twelve Years. But in the twelfth Year of *Jehoram*, the Prophets conſpired againſt him, as not being able to bear the Idolatry of that Family, and reſolving to revenge the Blood of their Brethren, whom *Jezabel* had ſlain. The King, therefore, being under Care of the Wounds, which he had receiv'd in a Battle with the *Aramites* or *Syrians*, *Eliſha*, who was now the chief Prophet and Profeſſor at *Naioth*, diſpatch'd one of his Order, to anoint *Jehu* one of the Captains; a Man of great Courage, and equal Ambition. The Prophet, according to his Inſtructions, call'd him aſide out of a very large Company of Captains, and military Officers, and having taken him into a private Chamber, anointed him King, with a Commiſſion to deſtroy all the Houſe of *Ahab*; and then opened the Door and fled. This was a very neceſſary Precaution; for had there been the leaſt Notice before-hand, of ſuch concerted Treaſon and Rebellion, the Prophet might not only have loſt his own Life, but endangered the whole Order. But there needed no other Motive and Encouragement to a Man of *Jehu*'s Fire and Ambition; and when he had told the Story to the reſt of the Officers, what had happen'd between him and this *Madman*, as they call'd him, the whole Company immediately fell into the prophetick

prophetick Rage. They all mounted and proclaim'd *Jehu* King. Upon which the ſick, wounded King, the Queen Mother, and all the Houſe of *Ahab*, with their Friends and Adherents, were moſt religiouſly murdered in the Name of the Lord.

Jehu having thus mounted the Throne, and cut off the whole *Ahab* Family, goes on with the natural Violence and Impetuoſity of his Temper, under a Pretence of Zeal for the Lord, and a Reſolution to extirpate Idolatry by Fire and Sword; and having got all the Prieſts of *Baal* together, cauſed them to be put to Death without ſparing one Man. After this he deſtroy'd all the Images and Places of Worſhip which had been ſet up to this *Zidonian* God. While he was about this Work, the Prophets applauded and extolled him to the Skies, and gave him a Leaſe of the Crown to the fourth Generation after himſelf, for his Zeal for the Lord of Hoſts. But after all, *Jehu* diſappointed theſe holy Men; for having exterminated the *Zidonian* Gods and Worſhip, which had been brought in by *Ahab* and his Family, he reſtored the *Egyptian* Idolatry as in *Jeroboam*'s Time, and thereby renew'd the Alliance with *Egypt*, after the *Syrians* had in a Manner depopulated and laid waſte the Country. However, for the little Good that *Jehu* had done in deſtroying all the Prieſts of *Baal*, the Prophets made good their Word with this new idolatrous

latrous Family, and ſuffered them to enjoy the Crown for four ſucceſſive Reigns, and during the Space of about a hundred Years. *Jeroboam* II. the laſt King but one of this Royal Family, by a long ſucceſsful Reign of forty one Years, had intirely ſubdued the *Aramites*, cleared the Country of that formidable, outragious Enemy, and retaken all the Cities and Towns which they had conquered from the Beginning of *Ahab*'s Reign. And yet this King was as great an Idolator, or Encourager and Supporter of Idolatry, as any that had been before him, and had reſtored the Obſervation of all the Sacrifices and Feſtivals of *Egypt*; which makes it evident, that the Toleration of Idolatry, had not been the real Cauſe of the Ruin and Devaſtation of this Country for above two hundred Years back. But, I take the Truth to be really this: About the Time that *Jeroboam* II. came to the Crown, the *Aſſyrians* began to grow very powerful, and had projected the Conqueſt of all *Aſia*; and, therefore, the *Aramites*, or *Syrians* of *Damaſcus*, were now obliged to put a Stop to their Wars in *Paleſtine* and *Arabia*, in order to defend themſelves at home; which gave *Jeroboam* an Opportunity to recover all that had been loſt, and within four or five Years after the Death of this King of *Iſrael*, the *Aſſyrians* conquer'd theſe *Aramites*, took and deſtroyed *Damaſcus*, and removed the Seat of the Empire to *Nineveh*; after

after which, or about the ſame Time, they broke in upon *Iſrael*, and conquered the Country; and within fifty Years, their Empire being eſtabliſh'd, they entirely deſtroy'd *Iſrael*, and led the ten Tribes captive. But *Jeroboam* dying, as I had obſerv'd, after a long ſucceſsful Reign of forty one Years, his Son, *Zacharias*, ſucceeded him, who reign'd but ſix Months: For this whole Family having reſtored and ſupported the *Egyptian* Idolatry, and their Leaſe being now expired, it was high Time to bring about another Revolution. And therefore *Shallum* conſpired againſt him, and ſmote him, and kill'd him in the Sight of all the People, to make good the Word of the Lord, and maintain the Credit of the Prophets. But this *Shallum* having committed Treaſon, in conſpiring againſt and killing the King, and thereby ſaved the Credit of the Prophets, reign'd but one Month in *Samaria*; and then *Menahem* went up and ſmote *Shallum*, and ſlew him, and reign'd in his Stead. And becauſe the City of *Tiphſaph* would not open to, and receive this new King, he ſmote and deſtroyed the Inhabitants, old and young, with all the Coaſts thereof, ſo far as *Tirzah*, and ript up the Women with Child. In this King's Reign the *Aſſyrians* invaded and enſlaved the Country, and within the Courſe of fifty Years put an End to theſe religious Wars, together with the regal Power and prophetick

Order in *Iſrael*, by leading away the whole Nation into Captivity, from which they never returned. And thus ended this religious Policy, with all the Credit and Influence of the Prophets for ever after. And tho' the Kingdom of *Judah* remained about one hundred and twenty Years longer, yet the few Prophets which afterwards aroſe among them met with no Quarter, and ſcarce any one of them died a natural Death. All this is ſufficient to ſhew, that Religion and Conſcience cannot be forced, and that the cruel Politicks and intemperate Zeal which attempted it, prov'd the Ruin of this antient and famous Nation.

During theſe inteſtine Wars, Outrages and Slaughter in *Iſrael*, on the Account of Religion, a moſt bloody War was carried on between the two divided Kingdoms on the ſame Account, or under the ſame Pretence, for the Space of about two hundred and ſixty Years, or from the Revolt of the ten Tribes to the *Aſſyrian* Captivity, and total Extirpation and Deſtruction of *Iſrael*. The Pretence of *Judah* was Religion, and their Ground of declaring War, as they profeſs'd, was only to deſtroy Idolatry, by re-uniting the revolted Tribes to the Houſe of *David*, a Prince who had never granted any Toleration in his Time, but rooted out Idolatry, and deſtroyed Idolaters by Fire and Sword, ſo far as he was able, in all the Nations round about

about him. But beſides this religious Pretext, the Men of *Judah*, or Houſe of *David*, had certainly another Reaſon at Bottom, and perhaps a more prevailing one, for the mercileſs and outragious Method, which they took with *Iſrael* after the Revolt; and that it was to recover their loſt Sovereignty over the Nation, and to reduce them again to the ſame Vaſſalage and Yoke of Bondage, which they were under in *David* and *Solomon*'s Time, while *Judah* ſway'd the Sceptre. But the Men of *Iſrael* were ſenſible of this, and, therefore, reſolv'd to maintain their Liberty, and never more to ſubmit to the Houſe of *David*, whatever might be the Conſequence, and though it ſhould prove their utter Extirpation and Diſſolution, as in Fact it did. The Prophets finding that they had gain'd no Ground in their religious Politicks by dividing the Kingdom, but rather entail'd Idolatry upon the Nation, would fain have reſtored the Kingdom to the Houſe of *David*; but this they were never able to effect. However, the Kingdom of *Judah*, to force the other Tribes to a Compliance, entered into an Alliance, firſt with the *Aramites* or *Syrians* of *Damaſcus*, and afterwards with the *Aſſyrians*, either to bring back the revolted Tribes, or utterly to root them out of the Land. But *Iſrael* remembred their former Vaſſalage under *Judah*, and of which they could obtain

no Promiſe of Redreſs at the Death of *Solomon*, and therefore choſe any Fate rather than their old Oppreſſion. But theſe Politicks in *Judah* and the Prophets ſoon brought about their own Deſtruction, and put an End to the regal Power and prophetick Office in *Judah*, as it had done in *Iſrael*. Their Friends and good Allies, the *Aſſyrians*, who had extirpated and led into Captivity their Brethren, by their Procurement, ſoon inſlaved them, laid waſte their Country, and made them Subjects and Tributaries; which Conqueſt the *Babylonians* afterwards completed and led them into Captivity after the other Tribes. And after this *Babyloniſh* Captivity, *Judah* could never recover the royal Power more, but remain'd ſubject to the *Babylonians*, *Perſians*, *Greeks*, and *Romans*, ſucceſſively, to their laſt and final Diſſolution and Extirpation, as a Nation or diſtinct People.

This ſhort Account of the Matter is ſufficient to ſhew, by what wrong Politicks in Religion, that unhappy Nation was reduc'd to ſuch a Fate. And as the ſame Principles muſt always have the ſame Conſequences, this Nation, I believe, have been ſet up by God and Providence, as an Example and Warning to all other Nations.

In all theſe religious Wars, Maſſacres, Outrages and Perſecutions, which laſted from the breaking out of *David*'s Rebellion

lion to the *Aſſyrian* Captivity, for the Space of about three hundred and ſeventy Years, it is wonderful to obſerve, how little theſe antient Prophets declaim'd againſt the Vices and Immoralities of the People; their open, profane Swearing, their execrable Curſes and moſt abominable Lies, their Luſts and Whoredoms, their Diſſimulation and Treachery, their Breach of the moſt ſolemn Oaths and Alliances, and their Cruelty, Outrage and Blood-thirſtineſs, contrary to all the Laws of Nature and Nations, and all which *David* himſelf had been moſt remarkable for, are ſcarce taken Notice of. But *David* is repreſented by theſe Prophets, as a Man after God's own Heart, and as having walked uprightly with the Lord, ſaving only in the Caſe of *Uriah* the *Hittite*. And in the mean while, nothing in a Manner is declared againſt but Idolatry, and the Neceſſity of Fire and Sword, as the moſt proper and only effectual Means of rooting it out. This was the Spirit of *David*, and the true religious Zeal for the Lord at that Time.

But after theſe Politicks had quite deſtroyed and exterminated one Part of the Kingdom, and enſlav'd the other, whoſe Ruin was now imminent; it muſt be own'd that the few Prophets who were left, had bought Experience, and began to talk in another Strain: Not only abſtaining from Idolatry,

but a true national Repentance, a ſtrict Regard to the moral Law, and no Reliance upon Sacrifices and prieſtly Abſolutions, was now found abſolutely neceſſary to a national Reſtoration, if ever it could be effected at all. This was the Voice of all the Prophets that were left, or roſe up after the *Aſſyrian* Captivity. But the Malady was now grown deſperate, and when the People came to be told of the Neceſſity of true Repentance, Righteouſneſs, and a ſtrict Obſervance of the whole moral Law, they took no Notice of it. After the Captivities, indeed, they relinquiſh'd Idolatry, and could never bear the Sight of an Image more; but as to their moral Character, they grew, if poſſible, worſe and worſe. They had never been told before of any Thing but Idolatry, as the Cauſe of all their Miſeries and Calamities hitherto, and which they had now quitted: And as they could not be charged with any Vices or moral Wickedneſs, which had not been approv'd of, and juſtify'd in *David*, their great Pattern and Exemplar, they now reſolv'd to ſtick to their Sacrifices and prieſtly Abſolutions in the legal Way. And this Method of Religion, or rather Superſtition and Enthuſiaſm, they kept to as long as they remain'd a Nation. They rejected all the Calls and Exhortations of their later Prophets, to Repentance, and Obedience to the moral Law, and depended on Salvation and

and Deliverance, from God's abſolute Covenant Promiſes and Decrees, without any Regard to their own moral Conduct to fit and prepare them for theſe Promiſes, or looking on them as thus conditional.

With this Enthuſiaſm, Superſtition, and predeſtinarian Preſumption, great Numbers of this Nation, at firſt, adhered to Jeſus, as their Meſſiah, or national Deliverer, tho' he could not prevail with them to bring forth any Fruits of Repentance, as a neceſſary Qualification for ſuch a Deliverance; yet they would have taken him by Force to make him King, and ſet him up againſt the *Romans* as their Meſſiah, or the Reſtorer of the Kingdom: But when they found that he had no ſuch ambitious Deſign, that he had renounced any ſuch Pretenſions to the very laſt, and declared that he came not with any ſuch particular View to the *Jewiſh* Nation, they all deſerted him at once, and cry'd out, Crucify, crucify him; though they had led him in Triumph through *Jeruſalem*, and proclaimed him King but a Day or two before, as they had done all over the Country for a Twelve-Month together. This was the Reaſon of the Rabble for crucifying him, and a Reſolution which they came to in a Moment, when they found that, contrary to their Expectations, he had declared againſt them upon his Trial before *Pilate*; though

had he declared for them, they would all have roſe for him at once, and reſcu'd him from the Prieſts and Rulers, as he tells *Pilate*, *John* xviii. 36.

But the High Prieſts and Rulers had another Reaſon for putting Jeſus to Death; not becauſe he had made himſelf the Meſſiah, or ſet up as the Reſtorer of the Kingdom; for they could prove nothing of this, tho' they pretended it: But their true Reaſon for cutting him off, was to prevent a national Rebellion, when they ſaw the Madneſs of the People, and that the Populace were reſolved even to force him into their Meaſures, and ſet him up as King, whether he would or no. They dreaded the Conſequence of ſuch a general Inſurrection, and in Caſe it ſhould happen, as they had great Reaſon to fear, they could expect nothing but Deſtruction from the *Romans*. This is the Reaſon which *Caiaphas* the High Prieſt gave in Council, when they were debating upon it, and could find no Evidence againſt him, as making any Pretenſions to the Meſſiah-ſhip; That it was better that one Man ſhould die, tho' ever ſo innocent, than that the whole Nation ſhould be deſtroy'd, which would be the Conſequence of a Rebellion at that Time, which the People were all ripe for, and ready to riſe in Arms for Jeſus. This Advice being thought good, they acquieſced in it, and proceeded upon it, and

tho'

tho' they could find no Proof, that Chriſt had made himſelf the Meſſiah, yet they preſumed that the whole Body of the People could never have run into ſuch a Notion, if ſome Encouragement had not been given. But herein, ſurely, the *Jewiſh* Mobility were miſtaken; for Jeſus had been ſo far from giving them any Encouragement to expect ſuch a Revolution at that Time, or that he himſelf was the Perſon they took him for, that on the contrary, finding their Impenitency and incurable Wickedneſs, he had often pronounced the Deſtruction of their City and Temple, and their final Diſſolution as a Nation; and which accordingly happened not many Years after. And this is a ſufficient Proof, after the Experience of ſeventeen hundred Years, that this obſtinate and ſuperſtitious Nation were then caſt off for their Impenitency, and that Jeſus was the laſt great Prophet that God intended to ſend them, and try them with, in order to their Repentance. And the Notion of the *Jews* at this Day, that the Promiſes and Prophecies relating to the Reſtoration of that Nation were abſolute, that they could never be forfeited, and that they are ſtill intitled to the Benefit, has not the leaſt Ground or Foundation in their own Writings. Nothing has ſince happened to them, but what *Moſes* himſelf had foretold. He knew from what he had ſeen and experienced of them, that

after his Death they would forſake God, forfeit all the Favour and Protection of his Providence, and be finally deſtroy'd and diſſolv'd as a People; and he left it upon Record againſt them, and cauſed his laſt dying Words to be written and preſerv'd in the Book of the Law. In the Days of Chriſt and the Apoſtles, the *Jews* who adhered to Jeſus, as the Meſſiah, after his Reſurrection, all expected that he would ſoon come again, with a ſufficient Power from Heaven, to deſtroy the *Roman* Empire, to reſtore the Nation, and to ſet up his Kingdom at *Jeruſalem*. And this was properly the *Jewiſh* Goſpel, which Chriſt's own Diſciples firmly adhered to, and preached. So that this Matter at firſt, with Regard to that Nation, was only a State Faction among the *Jews*; ſome of them receiving and adhering to Jeſus as the Meſſiah, and others rejecting him under this Character, which was the main Body of the Nation.

I ſhall not here enquire how it came about at firſt, that ſo ſmall and contemptible a Faction among the *Jews* ſhould propagate this Notion ſo far and wide in the Chriſtian Churches, and even among the *Gentile* Converts: But ſo it was; and yet I may venture to ſay, that none of our Chriſtian *Jews*, at this Time, will ever be able to prove, that the Reſtoration of the Kingdom to *Iſrael*, and making *Jeruſalem* the Seat of it, was not an eſſential

Character of the Meſſiah with all the Prophets, who ſaid any Thing of the Matter: Nor will our modern *Judaizers* be able to prove, that our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt ever made the leaſt Claim or Pretenſions to this prophetick *Jewiſh* Character, or that he pretended, in any peculiar Senſe, to be the Saviour and Deliverer of the *Jews*. I have ſaid thus much, to offer it to the farther Conſideration of ſuch learned Men among us, who may think that they are, or ever ſhall be, able to convince the *Jews* upon *Jewiſh* Principles. It is very plain, I think, that as many of the *Jews* in the Apoſtolick Age as embraced Chriſtianity, continued as firm *Jews*, in Obedience to the whole Law afterwards, as they had been before. Theſe *Judaizers*, or Chriſtian *Jews*, received nothing new on their becoming Chriſtians, but the ſingle Article, that Jeſus was the Meſſiah in the literal Senſe of the Prophets, *i. e.* in their own national Senſe. And it is evident, that St. *Paul* could not have preached and taught Chriſt among the *Gentiles*, as the Author and Founder of a new ſpiritual Kingdom, and as the common Saviour of the World, with any peculiar Regard to that Nation; he could not, I ſay, have done this, but by throwing off the literal Senſe of the Prophets in this Caſe.

Theoph. I muſt own, that your hiſtorical Account of this whole Matter looks plauſible.

You

You have almoſt perſuaded me, that the *Jews* can never be convinced and converted to our Religion by *Moſes* and the Prophets, and that even Chriſtianity itſelf, upon ſuch a Foot, would be but ſlightly grounded. But then, I doubt, the main Difficulty here will be to get fairly rid of ſuch an Incumbrance, ſince it is plain, that Chriſt himſelf (as well as the Apoſtles afterward) frequently appeals to the antient Prophets of the *Jewiſh* Nation, for the Truth of his Doctrines and Miſſion from God, as the Perſon whom they had prophefied of and foretold; and if this Appeal ſhould be ſet aſide as weak or inſufficient, the Conſequence muſt be, that Jeſus was what the *Jews* would make him, an Impoſtor and falſe Prophet. No doubt, *Philalethes*, but you muſt ſee, that this is no trifling Objection; and, therefore, I hope you will not treat it as ſuch.

Philal. The Objection, indeed, is of ſome Weight; and, I believe, it is the main Thing that has ſtuck with many learned Chriſtians, who otherwiſe would not have been infinitely fond of *Moſes* and the Prophets, as the Fathers and Founders of Chriſtianity. But while I have St. *Paul* as my Expoſitor and Guide in this Caſe, I cannot think the Objection unanſwerable: And, I had obſerv'd and prov'd before, that this great Apoſtle of the *Gentiles* underſtood *Moſes* and the Prophets, as to all that relates to Chriſtianity,

in

in a figurative and allegorical, or myſtical Senſe, and rejected their literal, obvious, and plain Senſe, as falſe, abſurd, and contrary to the true Reaſon and Spirit of the Goſpel. He argued with the *Jews ad Hominem*, and made the beſt Uſe he could of their own Principles and Conceſſions; as any wiſe and good Man would and muſt have done, under the ſame or like Circumſtances. And, I take this Apoſtle to be a better Caſuiſt and Expounder of the Doctrines of Chriſt, and of the true Nature, Genius, and Deſign of Chriſtianity, than all the reſt put together. It is true, that Jeſus himſelf frequently appeals to *Moſes* and the Prophets, as Witneſſes of the Truth and Genuineneſs of his Doctrines, as coming from God; and conſequently, that he could be no Impoſtor or Deceiver. And every Thing in *Moſes* and the Prophets, relating to moral Truth and Righteouſneſs, muſt be a Proof of this; and, therefore, ſo far he might fairly urge their Teſtimony. But he never once appeals to them, that he was the Perſon who was to reſtore the Kingdom to the Houſe of *David*, or the Meſſiah in their national Senſe, and in the plain, obvious Senſe of all the Prophets who had ſaid any Thing about it: So far from it, that he renounced this prophetick Character, and died upon that Renunciation. And if he had not done this, he need not have ſuffered as he did; nor could the *Jewiſh* Prieſts and

and Rulers, nor even the *Romans* themſelves, with all the Power they had then in the Country, have put him to Death; and *Pilate* was fully convinced of this, and therefore would have ſaved Jeſus, had it been practicable. But the enraged Mob, thus diſappointed, would have no Mercy.

Whether *Moſes* and the Prophets underſtood Chriſtianity, foreſaw the Goſpel Diſpenſation, and intended to introduce it, is at leaſt doubtful, and may always be diſputed. But not to inſiſt on ſuch Minuteneſſes, and even *Minutiæ Minutiarum*, let us try, if you pleaſe, the Strength of this Argument from Prophecy, upon the utmoſt Conceſſion that can poſſibly be made. Let us then ſuppoſe, that the Prophets foreſaw and foretold the Birth, Life, Miracles, Crucifixion, and Reſurrection of Chriſt, particularly and minutely in all the Circumſtances of Time, Place, Perſons, *&c.* as related by the Evangeliſts; or that we had receiv'd from the Prophets the ſame Hiſtory preciſely, as Events which were afterwards to happen: What could this have prov'd, but only that theſe Men had the certain Knowledge of Futurity in thoſe Matters? And conſequently, that theſe Events were neceſſary, as depending upon neceſſary Cauſes, which might be certainly foreknown and predicted? But this, I think, could not poſſibly have prov'd the Truth of any Doctrines, or the Righteouſneſs of any Perſons,

and

and therefore could have been no rational Foundation of true Religion. The Life and Religion of *Mahomet*, and the Pope, might have been foretold, as ſome think they were; and they might have been propheſy'd of by unrighteous Men, as *Balaam* was a true Prophet, tho', it ſeems, a wicked Man; for *Balaam* propheſy'd of the Conqueſt of *Paleſtine*, *Arabia* and *Syria*, by *David* the Star of *Jacob*, and of the Captivities and Deſtruction of the *Iſraelites* afterwards by the *Aſſyrians*, *Chaldeans*, *Greeks* and *Perſians*. But, I cannot ſee how any of theſe, or other Prophecies, can be taken in Evidence for the Truth of Doctrines or Righteouſneſs of Perſons. All that Prophecy, taken in this Senſe of Prediction, can do, is, to acquaint us with ſomething future, that could not otherwiſe have been known: And here all Prophecy muſt terminate, and can go no farther. For the Prophets themſelves, whatever they may know of Futurity, may yet be intereſted, deſigning, or vicious Men, and make very wrong Judgments of Perſons and Things in their own Time. We have the Teſtimony of ſeveral of the antient *Jewiſh* Prophets, againſt many of their Brethren, the Prophets of that Time, that they often propheſy'd Lies in the Name of the Lord, ſew'd Pillows under the People's Arms, buoy'd them up with vain Hopes, and cry'd, Peace, Peace, when there was no Peace. And theſe Prophets juſtify and extol *David*'s

David's Character, and ſet up his Example as worthy to be imitated by all future Princes, tho' he had been the moſt bloody Perſecutor that ever had been known, and his whole Life had been one continued Scene of Diſſimulation, Falſhood, Luſt and Cruelty. But his rooting out Idolatry, and deſtroying Idolaters by Fire and Sword, where-ever he came, made Atonement for all, and canoniz'd him as the great Saint and Idol both of the Prophets and Prieſts.

The Religion of thoſe antient Prieſts before the Captivities, conſiſted only in an external Obedience to the Law, without regarding the Principle from which it proceeded, or whether it was free or forced. The Prophets, indeed, urged and inſiſted on ſuch an Obedience to the moral as well as ceremonial Law; but the Prieſts only regarded the People's Conformity to the Law of Ceremonies, from which they derived all their Wealth and Power: And this has been always the Caſe of moſt other Prieſts to this Day. But Mortification, Self-denial, and a Faith which can ſupport Men under Adverſity and above the World, an inward Purity of the Heart and Affections, and the Practice of univerſal Benevolence and Charity, moral Truth, Righteouſneſs, and Peace with all Men, from the Proſpect of Immortality, and a future State of ſpiritual Happineſs, to be enjoy'd with God and the Angels: This, I ſay, is a Religion which thoſe holy Men,

Men, the *Naioth* Prophets, never underſtood or taught. And how then they ſhould have had any Notion of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, or think any Thing rightly about it, is hard to conceive. They had, indeed, a general Notion and Expectation, that God would ſometime or other ſet up a better Oeconomy of Religion, under a clearer Light and more peaceful and righteous Adminiſtration; but as to what this Diſpenſation would be, upon what Principles it would be founded, or by what Means brought about, they knew nothing, and have told us nothing. Nay, they were miſtaken in all their Gueſſes and Conjectures about it; and what they ſaid of the Nature, Foundation and Method of introducing and eſtabliſhing this future Kingdom of Peace and Righteouſneſs, was perfectly wrong; for they all ſuppoſed, that it would be brought about by Conqueſt, or the Power of the Sword, and by a Prince of the Houſe or Lineage of *David*, who was to ſubdue all Nations, eſtabliſh his Kingdom in Peace at *Jeruſalem*, and bring the *Gentiles* into a peaceable Submiſſion and Obedience to this Government: In all which one may ſee a ſtrong national Prejudice, and a groſs Ignorance of the Nature of true Religion, and of that future, ſpiritual Diſpenſation, which God would introduce. Indeed, the State of Religion was ſo very bad and wretchedly corrupt among them, that it was natural to

hope for ſomething better, as the Philoſophers, and great Men among the Heathens, did. But they knew nothing in particular what it would conſiſt in, or how it would be brought about.

Theoph. How far the prophetick Spirit, as we now underſtand it, for the ſupernatural Gift of Foreknowledge, may be urged as Evidence for the Truth of Doctrines, or the Righteouſneſs of Perſons, I ſhall not now diſpute with you: As to this, I ſhall only ſay, *valeat quantum valere poteſt.* But then I do not yet ſee, that theſe antient Prophets were left quite ſo much in the Dark as to the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, or that they were ſo groſſly miſtaken, as you ſeem to imagine, concerning the future Reſtoration of their Kingdom and Nation. Many of the Prophets, and the Nation in general, might poſſibly miſtake in not diſtinguiſhing between the firſt and ſecond Coming or Appearance of Chriſt, the Meſſiah, or Reſtorer of the Nation; and they might expect that Deliverance, at his firſt Appearance in the World, which was not to be effected, or brought about, till his ſecond Coming. This, I am ſure, was the Notion of all the primitive, orthodox Chriſtians, for at leaſt three hundred Years, as it is ſtill the Opinion of many great and learned Men among our modern Divines, and at this very Time. And, if I am not greatly miſtaken, the later *Jewiſh* Prophets

phets, who liv'd under the *Perſian* Monarchy, plainly ſuppoſe and foretel this, that the Meſſiah was to die, or to be cut off, and then come from Heaven with an Hoſt of Angels, to bring about ſuch a Revolution. The Prophets, I here eſpecially refer to, are *Daniel*, and *Eſdras*. *Daniel*, in his Prophecy of the ſeventy Weeks, fixes the Time when the Meſſiah was to be cut off, *i. e.* in ſixty two Weeks after the coming forth of the Commandment or Decree from the King of *Perſia*, for the Reſtoration of the People. And this Decree came out at the very Time that *Daniel* was offering up his Supplications for ſuch a Deliverance, as the Text expreſſly tells us. The Weeks here are annual Weeks, or annual Sabbatick Cycles, as all allow, that is, the ſixty two Weeks are four hundred and thirty four Years. And, therefore, if this Decree came out in the ſeventh of *Artaxerxes* [*Mnemon*] and if Chriſt died in the thirty ſixth Year of the vulgar Chriſtian Æra, both which, I think, may be eaſily prov'd, this cutting off the Meſſiah will be juſt four hundred and thirty four Years after that Decree and Revelation to *Daniel*. But, if Chriſt died in the thirty third Year of the Chriſtian Æra, this would be in the Middle of the laſt Week of the ſixty two, which would do as well. I muſt own, that in this Computation, I ſuppoſe *Daniel* to have liv'd much later than is commonly ſup-

poſed, and that the Book of *Daniel*, as we now have it, has been in this Caſe greatly corrupted and interpolated, as I think I could demonſtrate, were this a proper Place and Time for it. Here then, according to my Chronology, *Daniel* propheſy'd of the Death of Chriſt, and was right as to the very Year, tho' the Event was not till four hundred and thirty-four Years after. And, according to this Computation, *Daniel*'s ſeven Weeks, at the End of which the City and Temple was to be built, and the ſeventy Weeks in which the Nation was to be quite exterminated, and the daily Sacrifice to ceaſe, will all fall in exactly with the Times at which they in Fact happened.

But, if you pleaſe to indulge me in a little farther Chat, before you interrupt me, I ſhall explain this Prophecy of *Daniel* ſomewhat more particularly, and then leave you to conſider how far it may affect Chriſtianity. I ſhall only, as I ſaid here, ſuppoſe the Truth of my Chronology, which yet, I think, I am able effectually to ſupport, as Occaſion may be offer'd.

Philal. For my Part, I ſhall not diſpute your Chronology at this Time, which Argument might lead us too much out of the Way, and take up more Time than we can now ſpare. You may, therefore, freely deliver the Matter in your own Senſe, and leave me only to conſider what Conſequences you would

would draw from it, or how far it may conduce to your main Purpoſe, as affecting Chriſtianity.

Theoph. You are very good to exerciſe ſuch Patience with me; but herein you will only pay a Value receiv'd.

I think, then, that *Daniel* the Prophet lived under the *Perſian* Captivity in the Days of *Artaxerxes* II. or *Mnemon.* It is evident, that this Decree for the Reſtoration of the People came out at the very Time that *Daniel* was offering up his Prayers and Supplications, for the Liberty of his Nation. And *Daniel* being now either in *Judea*, or in ſome remote Province diſtant from the Court, an Angel was ſent with the Intelligence, to acquaint him with the Decree or Commandment, which had been publiſh'd in their Favour, before any other Tidings could arrive. And this is a Demonſtration, that where-ever the ſeventy Weeks end, they muſt begin at that very Time, when the Prophet was offering up his Supplications, as the Angel expreſſly declares, Chap ix. 20---24. The modern *Jews*, in their falſe Chronology in this very Book, make this Decree to come out immediately after the Conqueſt of *Babylon* by the *Medes* and *Perſians*, in the firſt of *Darius* the *Mede*, which was in the Year before Chriſt 538, as is very well known. And in this Account, the ſeventy annual Weeks, or four hundred and ninety Years,

would terminate forty eight Years before the vulgar Chriſtian Æra; and, conſequently, could not have related to Chriſt, or the Goſpel Diſpenſation at all. And the ſame Objection, for the main, will hold good againſt any other Year, for the Time of *Daniel*, and the Publication of this Decree, when the four hundred and ninety Years ſhall terminate before the utter Deſtruction of the *Jewiſh* Nation, the Ceſſation of the daily Sacrifice, and the intire Diſſolution of their State and Polity, by the *abominating* Deſolations, or the Image of *Jupiter Olympius*, ſet up in the very Place where the Temple had ſtood, by the Emperor *Adrian*, about the Year of Chriſt 132. From this Time the *Jews* could never more conſecrate the holy Ground, or carry on the daily Sacrifices, as they had always done before, while they were in Poſſeſſion of the holy Ground, whether they had any Temple ſtanding or not. From this Time, the daily Sacrifice among them ceaſed, and a moſt bloody War enſued, which laſted about three Years and a half, and ended in the vulgar Year 136, when the *Jews* were utterly exterminated and baniſhed the Country by a Decree of *Adrian*, which made it Death for any *Jew* ever to return and ſettle there more. To this Period the Prophecy of *Daniel* muſt neceſſarily relate, if it be a true Prophecy, as I am apt to believe it is, and which I ſhall now prove upon my own Hypotheſis.

I ſuppoſe then *Daniel* to have lived not under the *Babylonian*, but the *Perſian* Captivity: That he flouriſh'd under the Reign of *Artaxerxes Mnemon*, and that the Decree here mentioned was that of the ſeventh of his Reign, when *Ezra* the Scribe was ſent up with a Commiſſion to repair the City, reſtore the Obſervation of the Law, and reduce the People to their antient OEconomy and Government. This was the Year before Chriſt 398. From this coming forth of the Commandment or Decree, to the cutting off of the Meſſiah, or Death of Chriſt, was to be ſixty two Weeks, or four hundred and thirty four Years. This terminates at the Beginning of the Year 36, when Jeſus was crucify'd, according to the true Chronology, as I could eaſily prove had I here Time for it. In ſeven Weeks, or forty nine Years after this Decree, the Wall was to be built, and the new Temple dedicated to Meſſiah the Prince, who was to come in Perſon while that City and Temple were ſtanding. This forty nine Years ended *Anno* 350, before Chriſt, when the *Perſians* having recovered *Ægypt* after ſixty three Years Revolt, reſtored the *Jews*, the main Body of whom had been held in Captivity there; and being now in the moſt imminent Danger of being conquer'd by the *Greeks*, favour'd the *Jews* as much as poſſible, to ſecure their Intereſt and Aſſiſtance in the War now dreaded from *Greece*. From

this Time the *Jews* in their own Country grew vaſtly numerous; whereas the whole Number of thoſe who had returned from the Captivities, from the firſt of *Cyrus* to the twentieth of *Artaxerxes Mnemon*, did not exceed fifty thouſand, including the whole Congregation, from twelve Years old and upward, Servants and all, according to *Nehemiah*'s Liſt. From this Time the ſeventy Weeks begin for the *Holy City* and People; for till now there was no City, and but very few People. And from hence the ſeventy Weeks, which were determined upon the whole City and People, to make an End of their Tranſgreſſions, to finiſh the Puniſhment of their Sins, and to conclude their whole OEconomy and Government; I ſay, theſe ſeventy Weeks terminate in the vulgar Year 140. And therefore, all this, the full and final Diſſolution and Deſtruction of that State and Nation, happened, according to the Prophecy, in the Middle of the laſt Week of the ſeventy, or in the Year 136.

Philal. I muſt own, that allowing your Hypotheſis, this Account comes nearer to the punctual and circumſtantial Accompliſhment of the Prophecy, than any other which I have ſeen. But then, you here aſk ſuch Poſtulata as muſt deſtroy the Credit of the Hiſtory, and particularly with regard to the Time in which *Daniel* liv'd and propheſy'd. I am aware, that you might ſay many Things

in

in Defence of your Chronology, and that it is generally allow'd, even by the moſt orthodox Writers, that the *Jewiſh* Hiſtory, after the *Babyloniſh* Captivity, happened to be very much corrupted. I ſhall therefore leave others to diſpute your Hypotheſis with you, who have thought more of the Matter, and who are more learned, or more critical in this Way. In the mean while, it is enough for me to ſuppoſe you in the right, and that not only this, but every other Prophecy, have been exactly and circumſtantially fulfill'd. I hope this Conceſſion will be thought ſufficient; and then, What Conſequences would you draw from it?

Theoph. The only Conſequence is this, that if you will not take clear, indiſputable *Miracles*, and the evident circumſtantial Accompliſhment of *Prophecies*, as a Proof of *Revelation*, there can be no ſuch Proof at all; and then we might as well give up the whole Affair, as the Effect only of *Impoſture* or *Enthuſiaſm*.

Philal. Do you here mean by *Revelation* any rational, moral *Truth*, that muſt appear as ſuch to the Mind or Underſtanding of Man, as ſoon as it comes to be fairly propoſed under its proper Evidence? I beg you would conſider a little what Anſwer to make, becauſe I think the Queſtion of very great Importance.

Theoph. I ſee what you aim at, and ſhall therefore endeavour to explain myſelf to you

as clearly and distinctly as I can. I have, then, always understood Truth to be of two different Natures or Kinds; namely, *natural* and *positive* Truth, or Truth in *Reason*, and Truth in *Fact*. There are many Things true, and of great Importance in Fact, which could not have been deduced by any Train of Reasoning from the natural Connexion, or necessary Consequences of Things. It is true, and a Truth of great Consequence to me, that I exist, that I am a Subject of moral Government, and that I must be happy or miserable in Futurity: But this is Truth which could be never known to you in the Way of abstract Reasoning, or without taking in the Facts upon which it must necessarily depend. And thus, whatever Benefits God might design to convey to the World by Jesus Christ, could never have been drawn from the natural Connexion and Consequences of Things, in the Way of abstract Reasoning, but must depend upon Testimony. And here I would beg of you to grant, that Miracles, and the Accomplishment of Prophecies, may be conveyed by historical Evidence, so as to produce a rational, solid Ground of Belief.

Philal. You need not have begg'd what I had granted before. But the only Question here is, What Proof Miracles and Prophecies can give us of *moral Truth*, or of the Truth of any Doctrines as coming from God,

God, and as neceſſary to our Salvation? We may be informed by human Teſtimony, and good hiſtorical Evidence, of very important Facts, no doubt, and Facts which we could not otherwiſe have known: But what certain Mark or Criterion have we to diſtinguiſh *human Teſtimony* from *divine Authority*, or how can we prove from human Teſtimony, that any Doctrine comes from God, as a Matter of Conſcience and eternal Salvation? It would not, as I conceive, juſtify me in receiving any Doctrine as from God, and reſting my eternal Salvation upon it, that Miracles had been wrought for the Proof of it in former Ages, or that ſuch and ſuch Things had happened correſpondent to the moſt antient Prophecies concerning them. There will be always two very ſtrong Objections againſt ſuch an Argument as this, when apply'd to Religion. Firſt, That it would be a hard Matter to prove the Thing as unexceptionably true in Fact, or that the firſt Report and Belief of it did not ariſe from Ignorance, Preſumption, Prejudice, *&c.* And, in the next Place, that no Conſequence can be drawn from any ſuch Thing, ſuppoſing it ever ſo true and clearly prov'd in Fact. For this, I think, is certain, that the Being and moral Perfections of God, and the natural Relations of Man to him, as his reaſonable Creature, and the Subject of his moral Government, cannot depend upon the Truth

Truth or Falſhood of any hiſtorical Facts, or upon our forming a right or wrong Judgment concerning them: For this would depend upon ſo many uncertain Circumſtances and Poſſibilities of Error, that God, in this Caſe, muſt be ſuppoſed to have placed the Salvation of Mankind upon a very precarious and ſandy Foundation. Beſides, I have prov'd already, that the Characteriſtick of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs, is the only ſure Mark or Criterion of any Doctrine or Practice, as coming from God, and divinely authoriz'd; and that we cannot quit this, or truſt to any Thing elſe, without expoſing ourſelves to all the Impoſture and Enthuſiaſm in the World.

Theoph. You are reſolv'd, it ſeems, to make thorough Work with poſitive Laws and external Rituals, or Things indifferent in Matters of Religion. But then, I ſhould ſtill be glad to know what Chriſtianity you would retain, or how you would diſtinguiſh it from the Religion of Nature?

Philal. And I, in Return, ſhould be glad to know, when you have thrown out the Religion of Nature, what Chriſtianity you would have left, or what Chriſtianity or the Goſpel Revelation is, as diſtinguiſh'd from natural Religion, or the Obligations of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs? I do not intend by this, to oppoſe Revelation to Reaſon, or to ſet up the Religion of Nature in Oppo-

ſition to Chriſtianity as ſuch; but pray reſolve me wherein they are diſtinguiſhable, and what are your moſt peculiar Doctrines of Revelation, when the eternal, immutable Doctrines and Principles of moral Truth and Reaſon are ſet aſide, and left out of the Account? I do not here expect, that you ſhould throw out the Doctrines and Principles of moral, immutable Truth and Righteouſneſs; but only to ſet them aſide ſo far as not belonging to the Account, when you are conſidering the ſimple, pure Revelation itſelf. This is all that I aim at, and which you muſt, I hope, look upon as a very reaſonable Demand.

Theoph. I muſt own, that I am not very ready to anſwer your Queſtions. I know there are ſeveral Doctrines which have been generally received as reveal'd Truths; but which you would preſently reject, not only as irrational, but unſcriptural too. Such as the commonly receiv'd Doctrines of the Trinity, hypoſtatick Union, Satisfaction, imputed Righteouſneſs, abſolute Decrees, indefectible, irreſiſtible Grace, *&c.* In ſhort, you have almoſt robb'd us of Revelation, and now you have taken it all away, you want to know where or what it is.

Philal. You ſeem to give up ſeveral Points in a Jeſt, which others would make a ſerious Matter of. But do you not ſtill maintain Church Power, prieſtly Abſolutions, the ſpiritual

ſpiritual Regeneration of Baptiſm, and the ſeal'd Pardons of the other Sacrament from authoriz'd Hands?

Theoph. I have no great Mind, at preſent, to anſwer any of your Queſtions: But I have ſeveral other Queſtions to aſk you, and hope you will not inſiſt now upon *quid* for *quo*. You muſt here, therefore, give me Leave to catechize you a little, not ſo much for Argument Sake, as my own Information. And I muſt aſk you, in the firſt Place, Whether the Doctrine of the Reſurrection of the Body, and a future, eternal State of Happineſs or Miſery, was not a peculiar Principle of the Chriſtian Revelation; and whether this was not ſtrictly and properly the *Life and Immortality brought to light by the Goſpel?*

Philal. This Doctrine, as Chriſt himſelf and the Apoſtles preach'd it, was believ'd before by all the Phariſees, who were then the main Body of the Nation. It had been received and believed among the *Jews*, by that Sect of the Phariſees from the Days of the Prophet *Eſdras*, who was cotemporary with *Zoroaſter*. *Zoroaſter* himſelf had profeſs'd and taught it among the *Perſians* four hundred Years before. And the *Perſian* Magoi had receiv'd and taught the ſame Doctrines of the Unity of God, a Reſurrection from the Dead, and a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, for many hundred Years

Years before *Zoroaſter*, who did not, in theſe Caſes, pretend to introduce any new Religion, but to reſtore the true, old, *Abrahamick* Religion, which had been in ſome Reſpects corrupted. All this, I think, Dr. *Hyde*, in his Book *de Religione veterum Perſarum*, makes very clear. This, therefore, could be nothing new among the *Jews* in Chriſt's Time, ſince the greater Part of the Nation had receiv'd it long before. And it may be obſerv'd, that our Saviour never blames the Scribes and Phariſees for not believing, profeſſing, and teaching theſe Doctrines, but for not practiſing them; which has been the Caſe of all Scribes and Phariſees ever ſince, and always will be ſo.

Theoph. But ſurely there was ſomething peculiar in that Diſpenſation; ſomething then preach'd as neceſſary to Salvation and eternal Life, which had never been advanced or taught before. What was this?

Philal. It was Salvation and eternal Life only in and by Jeſus, as Chriſt, the Meſſiah, Saviour, and Deliverer of the *Jews*, or the Reſtorer of the Kingdom to *Iſrael*, and to the Houſe of *David:* Beſides whom, as the *Jewiſh* Meſſiah, there was no other Name given under Heaven by which Men could be ſaved.

Theoph. But did Jeſus himſelf own or take upon him this Character, as the *Jewiſh* Meſſiah, or the Reſtorer of the Kingdom

dom to *Iſrael*, in their national and well-known Senſe?

Philal. No: He renounced it to the laſt, and died upon that Renunciation, by declaring before *Pilate*, that *his Kingdom was not of this World*, and that he had no ſuch worldly, ambitious Views, as the Prieſts and Rulers charged him with, and put him to Death for, nor could they prove any ſuch Thing againſt him; and therefore *Pilate*, upon Examination, would have acquitted him, had it not been for the Violence and Outrage of the Populace, who could not be ſatisfy'd but by his Crucifixion.

Theoph. But how came the People to be thus inraged at him all at once, when they had follow'd and favour'd him all along, led him in Triumph thro' *Jeruſalem*, and proclaimed him Meſſiah but a few Days before; who had ſo well guarded him in and about *Jeruſalem*, that the Prieſts and Rulers dared not lay Hands on him, for Fear of the People, and could not have done it the Night before, but ſecretly and by Craft?

Philal. This is a very proper Queſtion, and will let you into the Secret of the whole Affair. It is plain, that the *Jewiſh* Populace or Mobility had generally a Notion of him, as their Meſſiah, national Deliverer, or Reſtorer of the Kingdom. Upon this Suppoſition only they had follow'd and adher'd to him for a Twelve-Month together, and were

were all ready, at this Time, to take up Arms for him, and make him King even by Force. They had Expectations and ſtrong Hopes, that he would declare for them to the very laſt. But when they found that he diſclaimed it before *Pilate*, and quitted their Intereſt upon his Trial, they were all turned in a Moment, and, as one Man, cry'd out, *Crucify, crucify him, it is not fit that ſuch a Fellow ſhould live, away with him from the Earth.*

Theoph. This might be a ſufficient Reaſon, why the Populace ſhould turn againſt him all at once: But what made the High Prieſts and Rulers ſo violently againſt him from firſt to laſt? For they ſought all along to ſeize and put him to Death, while the People ſtood ſtrenuouſly by him, and guarded and protected him.

Philal. The Prieſts and Rulers were ſtill afraid of the People on one Hand, and of the *Romans* on the other. They thought if they ſhould ſeize Jeſus the Populace would ſtone them; and if the People ſhould ſet him up as King, it muſt bring on a War with the *Romans*, to the Deſtruction of the Nation. They could not prove that he had made any Pretenſions to the Crown againſt *Cæſar*, and yet they preſumed he muſt have given the People ſome Encouragement in that Way; or elſe ſo ſtrong and general an Expectation could never have been raiſed and kept up;

up; or at leaſt had he renounced any ſuch Pretenſions ſooner, as he did at laſt, the People would all have forſook him, as they did, as ſoon as they had found he was not for their Turn, that he was not the Man they aim'd at, and that he had, as they thought, betray'd them. That this was the Principle which the Prieſts and Rulers acted upon, is very plain; for when they came to debate it in Council, whether they ſhould apprehend and cut him off, and found they could have no plain direct Proof of his declaring for the Meſſiahſhip, ſome of them were for letting him go: But *Caiaphas*, who was then the acting High Prieſt, ſtood up, and told them, that in his Opinion, they had all miſtaken the Matter; for the Queſtion was not whether the Perſon charged was guilty or not, but whether it would be ſafe to let him alone. For ſince the whole Populace of the Country were ready to take up Arms for him, and declare him as King, if this ſhould happen, as ſeem'd likely, it muſt bring on a War with the *Romans*, to their utter Deſtruction: And, therefore, to prevent the worſt, it would be better that one Man, however innocent, ſhould ſuffer, than that the whole Nation ſhould periſh. This Advice was taken, and put in Execution; and the Conſequence of it, or how it ſucceeded, is very well known. This grand Event, therefore, in the Death of ſo

glorious

glorious a Martyr and Confeſſor to the Truth, was not ſo much owing to the Malice of the Prieſts and Rulers, as to the Neceſſity of Affairs, and the Madneſs and Superſtition of the common People; they who had declared him their Meſſiah, or King, for a Twelve-month together all over the Country, and who had led him in Triumph through *Jeruſalem*, and proclaim'd him King but two or three Days before; when they found now that he had renounced that Character upon his Trial, and ſatisfied *Pilate* that he had no Deſigns againſt *Cæſar*, or any Views at a temporal Kingdom, the Populace all turned againſt him at once, and the whole Nation then preſent, from all Parts, at the Feaſt, join'd in the Cry, Crucify, crucify him. It was not now in the Power of *Pilate* to have ſav'd him, even though the Prieſts and Rulers ſhould have join'd with him in it. He fell a Victim to popular Superſtition, Rage and Phrenzy; and the ſame Cauſe muſt have had the ſame Effect any where elſe, or at any other Time. Had he then declared for the Meſſiahſhip or Kingdom, as that People expected, they would all have armed in his Defence, and it would not have been in the Power of the Governor, or any Power then in the Nation, to have put him to Death. That the *Jewiſh* Populace in general had ſuch an Expectation from him, is evident, beyond all Contradic-

tion. Nay, his own Disciples had all along adhered to him upon this vain Hope, and even after his Resurrection, they never preached Jesus as the Messiah or Christ in any other Sense. No Christian *Jew* ever believ'd in Jesus as the common Saviour of the World, without Distinction between *Jew* and *Gentile*. This was St. *Paul*'s Gospel, which he had received, as he declared, by immediate Revelation from Christ himself; and had never advised or consulted with any of the *Jewish* Apostles about it, as well knowing that they would never come into it.

Theoph. Christianity then, as you represent it, was nothing else but a political Faction among the *Jews*; some of them receiving Jesus as the Messiah or Restorer of the Kingdom, and others rejecting him under that Character.

Philal. I take this to be the plain Truth of the Matter; for they who received him as the Messiah, were as zealous for the Law, and as great Sticklers for it, as the rest who rejected him.

Theoph. Instead of ending this Debate, we seem to be just beginning it. What, I beseech you, did the Apostles of Christ preach two different Gospels? Did *Peter*, *James* and *John* preach one Gospel, and *Paul* another? You seem to plead the Cause of Infidelity and Scepticism so well, that one would think you

you were hired to it, or had ſome great Intereſt and Concern in it.

Philal. I plead the Cauſe of God and true Religion as well as I can; and therefore, by *Infidelity* here, I hope you do not mean *Atheiſm*, *Immorality*, or *Irreligion* of any Sort. And as for *Scepticiſm*, it is a Word of *Greek* Derivation, and of ſuch doubtful Conſtruction as we uſe it, that I know not what you mean by it, and much queſtion whether you know yourſelf. I know it is uſed as a modern Term of Reproach, like Atheiſt, Deiſt, Heretick, Schiſmatick, and many other ſuch important Shibboleths and Party Terms: But a Sceptick, in the natural and only juſt Senſe of the Word, ſignifies an Enquirer or Searcher after Truth, one who will believe no more than he can ſee Reaſon for, and who will take the Liberty to reject any Opinions whatever, how ſacred ſoever they may have been thought, or how generally ſoever receiv'd, upon the moſt current Authorities, till, upon a free, impartial Enquiry, they appear reaſonable or probable to his own Underſtanding. And this is certainly the greateſt and beſt moral Character in the World, and without it a Man can neither be wiſe nor honeſt. It is really wonderful to me, *Theophanes*, that the very Men who talk moſt againſt Scepticiſm, and endeavour to cry it down as Atheiſm and Infidelity, yet pretend, at the ſame Time, to be

the greateſt *Scepticks* in the World, or the freeſt and moſt impartial *Enquirers*. With theſe Men Scepticiſm, Infidelity, Atheiſm, and all ſuch Terms of Infamy and Reproach, ſignify nothing elſe but being of a *different Opinion*, or not ſubmitting one's ſelf to their Infallibility, or rather to the Infallibility of their Party, while they have no Judgment or Opinion of their own. But this Infallibility lies in the moſt invincible Prejudice and incurable Wrong-headedneſs. Such a Man's Paſſions may govern him, and run away with his Underſtanding, till he is ſo far out of Sight, or any diſcriminating Notices of Truth, that he will venture his eternal Salvation upon it, that he ſees plainly what he does not and cannot poſſibly ſee, and of which he had never any one Thought or conſiſtent Idea in his Life. Men may talk, *Theophanes*, without thinking; and you may eaſily perceive, that our greateſt Talkers, and moſt poſitive Deciders, never think at all.

Indubitable Faith, and *Certainty of Perſuaſion*, the *Infallibility of Story*, the indiſputable Orthodoxy of a Majority, join'd with the popular, paſſionate Outcry againſt Deiſts, Infidels, Scepticks, Free-thinkers, *&c.* are the ſure Signs, either of a very bad Cauſe, or a very weak Defence of a good one. Men never take this Method till Reaſon has forſaken them, and then their loudeſt and bittereſt

bittereſt Complaints are againſt Reaſon itſelf. No doubt, but many large, elaborate Volumes will be written, and a thouſand Sermons preach'd againſt a little Book of mine, if this Dialogue ſhould ever happen to be publiſh'd; in which my Adverſaries, eſpecially the *Judaizing* Part of the Clergy, will clearly and triumphantly confute all that I have ſaid, without anſwering any one Objection. But when I have try'd your Strength upon the Argument, I ſhall not be in much Pain about any after Reckonings, but patiently ſubmit to whatever, without Proof, they may pleaſe to call me.

Theoph. I muſt own, that your Attempt, or at leaſt viſible Aim, to ſet the Apoſtles, Prophets and Teachers in the Apoſtolick Age together by the Ears, under a Notion or Pretence that ſome of them were *Jews* and others *Chriſtians*, ſhock'd me a little: But the Reaſon of this, may be, that I have never hitherto, and cannot yet enter into your Way of thinking. But I do not know, that I have any Prejudice to Truth, or at leaſt, I am ſure, that I have no ſuch wilful and indulged Prejudice. And, I muſt tell you, Sir, that your Compliment of trying the Strength of the Argument with me, is very ill-timed and placed; for, as I did not expect any ſuch Attack on this Side, I was not well prepared for it, or armed againſt it. However, as you have not yet convinced me,

you ought not to give yourſelf any Airs upon it, eſpecially with Regard to our *learned Clergy*, whom you may pleaſe to call *Judaizers*, and among whom I doubt not but you will meet with Men enough, ſufficiently able to cope with you, and who will give you a very different Opinion, both of their Strength and Impartiality, from what you ſeem to have at preſent.

Philal. I ſhould rejoice to ſee ſuch Adverſaries among the hierarchical Men, or *Judaizing* Part of the Clergy; and if God will ſpare my Life till he has raiſed them up, I ſhould deſire, in this World, no greater Bleſſing. But, before theſe Gentlemen are up in Arms, it may not be amiſs to cut them out a little more Work, leſt they ſhould riſe for nothing.

Theoph. But, with Submiſſion, before you cut out more Work for others, I muſt beg Leave to cut out a little more for you. You own then, that the Chriſtian Religion, when rightly underſtood, is the true Religion; that Jeſus Chriſt was the greateſt Prophet that ever appear'd in the World; that he has promulged and declared the Will of God more fully and clearly than any other; and that conſequently you adhere to him in Oppoſition to, or Contradiſtinction from any other Prophet, Reformer, Lawgiver, or Promulger of the Will of God to Mankind. I think, *Philalethes*, I do not miſapprehend you ſo far

as this; or if I do, I am ready to ſtand corrected.

Philal. You are perfectly right, *Theophanes*; and I ſhould think myſelf happy, if upon theſe Terms you would allow me to be a Chriſtian: But if you think I cannot be a Chriſtian without being a *Jew*, or receiving the *Jewiſh* Canon as the Rule of Chriſtian Faith, I believe we ſhall never come together, or go to Heaven in the ſame Way. I am a Chriſtian upon the Foot of the *New Teſtament*, and I have talk'd with you a little already about the *Jewiſh* Proofs of Chriſtianity, and what Sort of Chriſtians they were. It is certain, I think, that all their Proofs failed them, though ſome of them ſtuck to him upon a Principle which he had never eſpouſed, but always diſclaimed. It will be impoſſible for the Chriſtians ever to convince the *Jews* upon *Jewiſh* Principles. St. *Paul*, the great Apoſtle of the *Gentiles*, could never convince one of them upon thoſe Principles. That great Apoſtle ſaw, that it was impoſſible to unite two different and oppoſite Schemes of Religion; or, which is the ſame Thing, to reconcile true Religion, and Liberty of Conſcience, with Enthuſiaſm, Perſecution and Superſtition. The *Jewiſh* State, or the Religion of *Moſes*, had been founded in the Principles of Perſecution, in which Idolatry was to be exterminated, and Idolaters deſtroyed by Fire and Sword. Under this

Conſtitution, indeed, there was Room left for all Nations to be *proſelyted* or *naturalized*, without being circumciſed, or ſubmitting to the ceremonial Law. But then, they were abſolutely to ſeparate themſelves from all Idolaters, or People of other Religions; and this Separation was to regard all Family Intercourſe of eating and drinking together, Cohabitation, Intermarriages, Alliances in War, or any other Conjunction of Intereſt, though it ſhould appear ever ſo neceſſary for mutual Defence and Self-Preſervation. And theſe Proſelytes, or naturalized Foreigners, upon this Contract and Coalition were obliged to aſſiſt the State, in caſe of Need, with all their Forces, to deſtroy Idolaters whenever they came into the Country, or ſprang up there, though as Friends, and deſiring a Conjunction of Intereſts for a common Safety. This ſtrict and rigid Separation from all the reſt of the World, and abjuring their Friendſhip or Alliances as Idolaters, is ſo cloſely interwoven with all the Laws of *Moſes*, that it may be call'd the fundamental Conſtitution of that State or Body politick. This *Jewiſh* Lawgiver thought that it would be impoſſible to keep Idolatry and falſe Religion out of the Society, but by puniſhing it with Death; and that true Religion might be promoted and ſecured by Force. And this was the Genius and Complexion of the whole Nation, from firſt to laſt;

laſt; and no *Jew*, or Diſciple of *Moſes*, ever believ'd, that true Religion could be ſupported and maintained, without an external Juriſdiction, and temporal Power over Conſcience.

When the Goſpel came to be preach'd to the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, they gave it a very different Reception. The *Jews* could receive nothing contrary to their old Superſtition and national, *Egyptian* Prejudices. And, therefore, when St. *Paul* came to preach Chriſt as the common Saviour of the World, there was not one *Jew* that could ever give into his Scheme. They would have allowed the *Gentiles* the Privileges of Chriſt's Kingdom, ſo far as they would be proſelyted or naturalized, and thereby enter into their national Incloſure and Separation from the reſt of the World: But beyond this they could never be brought, by any Argument or Reaſon, to move a Step. And, therefore, *Peter*, who had the Keys, ſhut the Gates of the Kingdom againſt the whole *Gentile* World, who would not ſubmit to the Law of Proſelytiſm, or *Jewiſh* Naturalization. This Point was carried in the firſt Council at *Jeruſalem* by all the *Jewiſh* Apoſtles, Elders, and Brethren then preſent; and that this was againſt all St. *Paul*'s Remonſtrances, and earneſt Endeavours to the contrary, is very plain.

This Apoſtle had been preaching Chriſt, as a common Saviour, to the *Gentiles*, without any

any Regard to the Law for now above fourteen Years, I think ſeventeen. A great Noiſe having been now made at *Jeruſalem*, about *Paul*'s receiving the Heathen *Gentiles* at *Antioch* without Proſelytiſm, was the true Occaſion of appealing to the Council, as the Hiſtory abundantly proves. Upon this great Occaſion, and Perplexity of Affairs, St. *Paul* went up to *Jeruſalem*, not only as a Deputy from the Church with others, but by a particular Revelation to himſelf, by which he was commiſſioned to go. He went up ſome Time before the Sitting of the Council, and communed privately with *James*, *Peter* and *John*. In this Conference he told them plainly the Goſpel, which he had been for many Years preaching to the *Gentiles*, before he came ſo near to *Jeruſalem* as *Antioch*. No doubt, but the Apoſtle here preſs'd as earneſtly as poſſible for an Exemption for the Heathen Converts from the Laws of Proſelytiſm, ſince upon this Foot he could not purſue his Deſign, or propagate Chriſtianity among the *Gentiles*.

Theſe three leading Men, among the Chriſtian *Jews*, then ſeem'd ſatisfy'd with St. *Paul*'s Account of the Matter; gave him the Right Hand of Fellowſhip, as the Apoſtle of the *Gentiles*; confirmed his divine Miſſion which he had received by Revelation, and promiſed not to diſturb or moleſt him in that Miniſtry. But when it came to the Trial,

Trial, they could not carry the Matter ſo far in the Council; for after much Diſputing, and the warmeſt Debates, it was reſolved upon, that theſe legal Qualifications ſhould bind all the *Gentiles* without Exception. And in Conſequence, as I obſerv'd, they ſhut the Gates of the Kingdom againſt all *Gentiles* who would not be proſelyted or naturalized.

St. *Paul* not having been able to carry his Point in the Council, was forced afterwards to go on in his own Way, and to declare againſt their Authority. Upon the Riſing of the Council, *Peter* went down with *Paul* to *Antioch*, and there lived for ſome Time eating and drinking with the *Gentile* Converts, in the new hoſpitable Way, or juſt as Mankind, however differing in Religion, ought to treat one another. But it was not long before certain Brethren, *Judaizing* Zealots, went down from *James* to break off this Alliance between *Peter* and *Paul*, and to demand a Submiſſion to the Council. This frighted *Peter* out of his new Alliance, and from henceforth he ſeparated from the *Gentile* Converts, and would never eat or drink, or maintain any Family Intercourſe with them more. St. *Paul* could not but be highly provoked at this Fickleneſs and Irreſolution of *Peter*, and hereupon he withſtood him to the *Face*, i. e. they had a warm Debate before the whole Church. But *Peter* not being able to bear St. *Paul*'s Reproofs,

nor

nor anſwer his Arguments, ſeparated from him, and drew off *Barnabas*, who was carried away with the *Diſſimulation of thoſe of the Circumciſion.* St. *Paul*, in the two firſt Chapters of his Epiſtle to the *Galations*, mentions *Peter* five or ſix Times, to let them ſee that he was the principal Perſon aim'd at, as the Head and Ring-Leader of the *Judaizers*, who would ſtill keep up the Separation between *Jews* and *Gentiles* in the Chriſtian Churches, or Kingdom of Chriſt.

But theſe *Judaizers*, or Chriſtian *Jews*, did not ſtop here; but ſoon fell into groſs Idolatry, and ſet up a great Number of Mediators and Interceſſors with God, inſtead of one. We have, indeed, no diſtinct, plain Account of this in profane Story, as we have very little of that Kind before the End of the third, or Beginning of the fourth Centuries. But it is confeſs'd, on all Hands, that the Apocalypſe was writ long before, and is a Book of the Apoſtolick Age. I think, Sir *Iſaac Newton* has proved it to be a genuine Work of St. *John*'s, and that it was written in *Nero*'s Time, two or three Years before the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem.* And, however dark and obſcure the prophetick Parts of this Book may be, yet the Doctrinals contained in it are very clear, and cannot eaſily be miſtaken. And from this Book, I think, it appears plainly, that the Chriſtian *Jews*, ſo early as this, had eſtabliſh'd

liſh'd the *Mediation of Angels*, the *Invocations of Saints at their Tombs*, and Prayers for the Dead. They propheſied the ſudden Downfall of the *Roman* Empire, and the near Approach of a fifth Monarchy, by the Coming of Chriſt, with a ſufficient Power from Heaven to ſet up his temporal Kingdom at *Jeruſalem*, when all Enemies were to be deſtroy'd by Fire and Sword, and the Government of the Earth given to theſe militant Saints. And that theſe are the plain Doctrinals of the Book, might be eaſily prov'd. It was then, it ſeems, a current Doctrine among the Chriſtian *Jews*, and here plainly eſtabliſhed, that the miniſtring Angels were Mediators between God and us, and that they offered up our Prayers at the Throne of God, and recommended our Services to the divine Acceptance, as the Prieſts at the Altar did under the Law. Thus the twenty four Elders, or principal Angels which ſtood before the Throne, are repreſented as having Gold Cenſers in their Hands full of Incenſe, which is the Prayers of the Saints. They pretended to know the different Orders of Angels, and could call upon them, at leaſt the principal of them, by Name; and therefore 'tis no Wonder that the mediatorial Worſhip of Angels was ſo common among them. This Worſhip of Angels, indeed, was then only mediatorial and not immediate and direct, and therefore the Angel

Angel refuſed St. *John*'s immediate direct Adoration, when he was going to pay it to him. But if the Angels are our Mediators and Interceſſors with God and the Lamb, as this Book plainly ſuppoſes, there is all the Reaſon in the World, that we ſhould addreſs them in their mediatorial Capacity, ſubordinate to Chriſt. And the ſame Reaſon will hold good for the Invocation of Saints. St. *John* ſaw under the Altar the Souls of them which had been ſlain for the Word of God, and for the Teſtimony which they had born, crying out continually, *How long, Lord, holy and true, doſt thou not avenge our Blood on them that dwell upon the Earth!* Chapter vi. *ver.* 8, 9. And if the departed Saints and Martyrs are ſtill in ſuch a State of earneſt Deſire, Hope and Expectation of a full complete Deliverance, we ought ſurely to pray for them as they do for us, and even pray to them, or requeſt their Prayers and Interceſſions with God for us, whenever we apprehend them preſent. And this, no doubt, was the Foundation of that moſt antient Practice of the Chriſtians, eſpecially the *Judaizers*, of meeting together, and performing their religious Worſhip and divine Services in their Cemeteries or Burying-Places. They had a Notion, that the Souls of their deceaſed Saints and Martyrs, not being in a full State of Happineſs, remain'd hovering about their Tombs and Sepulchres till

till the Reſurrection; where being preſent, they could hear the Prayers, and be Witneſſes to the Devotions of the Living.

This Notion being once receiv'd and eſtabliſh'd, it was eaſy and natural to run out of one Degree of Superſtition into another; from praying for the Dead, they ſoon came to pray to them; and from praying to them, as their Interceſſors with God and the Lamb, in a ſubordinate, mediatorial Capacity, they proceeded to invoke them directly. And this Practice prevail'd throughout all *Chriſtendom* before the End of the fourth Century, as I could abundantly demonſtrate, was this a proper Place for it.

But the great and dangerous Part of the Scheme, with regard to thoſe primitive Chriſtian *Jews*, was, that they confin'd Salvation to themſelves. They believ'd in Chriſt only as their national Reſtorer and Deliverer, or as the Hope and Salvation of *Iſrael*; and they excluded the whole *Gentile* World from all the Benefits of the Kingdom, but on the Condition of their being circumciſed, or at leaſt being naturaliz'd by Proſelytiſm. No Chriſtian *Jew* ever believ'd in, or preach'd Chriſt as the common Saviour of the World, of both *Jew* and *Gentile*, by a new Law of his own, independent of the Law of *Moſes*. They always took the fifth Monarchy, or Kingdom of the Meſſiah, to be a temporal Kingdom, which was immediately to ſucceed the

the Deſtruction of the *Roman*, *Latin*, or Weſtern Empire ſeated at *Rome*. And they founded this Kingdom in Blood and temporal Deſtruction, as the four Monarchies before had been ſucceſſively founded. And they believ'd, that a new *Jeruſalem* would be the Metropolis of this Empire, a City to be built without Hands, and coming down from Heaven, twelve thouſand Furlongs ſquare, or fifteen hundred Miles; and that all the *Gentiles* would be forced to bring in their Riches and Treaſures, as Contributions, and Marks of Homage, to their *Jewiſh* Meſſiah, whoſe Reign was to be a thouſand Years. *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, *Moſes* and the Prophets, and all the believing holy *Jews* in every Age or Country, were to be raiſed from the Dead to poſſeſs this Kingdom, and to glut their Revenge upon the *Gentile*, unbelieving World. This was the *Jewiſh* Goſpel; and this is the plain and evident Doctrine of the Apocalypſe. And whoever does not believe all this, muſt be damn'd, and the deepeſt Curſe, or Anathema, is denounced at the Cloſe againſt that Man, who ſhould add to, or diminiſh from the Words of this Book; as, that God ſhall add to him all the Plagues and Curſes written therein, and ſtrike his Name out of the Book of Life.

Theoph. I have heard you with Patience hitherto; but now you are running beyond all

all the Boundaries of Truth and Reaſon. Inſtead of fixing and explaining Chriſtianity, as I hoped you would have done, you are endeavouring to perplex and darken it, by reſting the Cauſe upon an abſtruſe, unintelligible Book. But I hope we may be Chriſtians, without underſtanding the *Revelations*.

Philal. You cannot be a *Chriſtian Jew* without underſtanding the *Jewiſh Chriſtianity*. And this Book is, in *that Senſe*, the Chriſtian Revelation, or the Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, which is the very Title of the Book; but no other Book of the *New Teſtament* aſſumes or claims any ſuch Character. The Goſpels and Epiſtles contain either hiſtorical Accounts of Facts, or practical Rules, Exhortations and Directions grounded upon thoſe Facts, as well as the Nature and Reaſon of Things. And, therefore, if you reject this Book, as the true and proper Chriſtian Revelation, or Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt, which had been receiv'd and own'd as ſuch in all the primitive Ages, by every Chriſtian *Jew*; I would fain know what you mean by the *Chriſtian Revelation*, as diſtinct from the Religion of Nature, reviv'd?

Theoph. I take the Apocalypſe to contain a true Prophecy of the State of Mankind, and all the great Revolutions of the World, from the Time when it was written, to the Conſummation of all Things: But I cannot pretend to enter into all the prophetick Cha-

racters of the Book, as if I could underſtand the Times, Seaſons, and particular Events, as well as the Prophet himſelf. And beſides, perhaps the Prophecies were only intended to be explain'd by the Event, and not to make us Prophets, or to let us into the Secrets of Heaven. But when Prophecies come to be fulfill'd, the Event will plainly prove their Accompliſhment, and this will ſufficiently demonſtrate that the Things were foreſeen; and, conſequently, that the World is governed by a wiſe, intelligent, and overruling Providence. And this, perhaps, may be the principal Deſign and Uſe of Prophecy.

Philal. I am not now talking to you about the Prophecies, but Doctrines of this Book; not of what is not reveal'd, but of what is reveal'd and plainly declar'd in it. As to the prophetical Parts of the Book, it is plain that the Author look'd upon all the Events there repreſented to him, as very near at Hand, and juſt ready to be accompliſhed. It is a *Revelation of Things which were ſhortly to come to paſs.* When *Daniel* had the ſame Revelation about the fifth Monarchy, or the Kingdom of the *Jewiſh* Meſſiah, he was order'd to ſeal the Book, or to keep it apocryphal, becauſe the Time was long. And accordingly this Book was never publiſh'd till about the Time of the *Maccabees*, when the *Jews* expected their final and general

neral Reſtoration; but when the ſame Prophecy of the fifth Monarchy was given to *John*, he was not to ſeal, but immediately to promulge the Book, and ſend it to the Churches, becauſe the *Time was at Hand*. But the Event has ſince prov'd that the Time was long, even in St. *John*'s Days, and not ſo near at Hand as he preſumed. The fifth Monarchy, according to him, was immediately or very ſoon to ſucceed the fourth, as the firſt four had ſucceeded one another. But *Rome*, or the *Roman* Weſtern Empire, which was then propheſied againſt, has now ceaſed for twelve hundred and ſixty Years, and yet no ſuch univerſal Empire of Peace and Righteouſneſs, under a *Jewiſh*, national Meſſiah, has yet appear'd.

I know not what Right Mr. *Whiſton* had to place an Interval of twelve hundred and ſixty Years between the Deſtruction of the fourth, and the Riſe of the fifth Monarchy; nor from what Right or Reaſon he and others have taken a Day for a Year, in the Interpretation of thoſe Prophecies. I am ſatisfy'd there is no Foundation for it in Scripture; and that Days and Years, as there us'd, always ſignifies natural Days and Years, and nothing elſe. The *Jews* had no ſuch Computation as putting a Day for a Year, tho' they had annual Weeks. And therefore when Weeks are mentioned, as in the famous Prophecy of *Daniel*, it may ſignify

Weeks of Years, as well as Weeks of Days. When God told *Ezekiel* that he had given him a Day for a Year, and that as the Temple had then ſtood three hundred and ninety Years from the Revolt of the ten Tribes, ſo it ſhould be taken and ſpoil'd in three hundred and ninety Days from that Time; this had no Relation to the modern pretended, prophetick Character, in putting a Day for a Year; for here Years ſignify Years, and Days Days, and nothing elſe: But, as I ſaid before, I am not now diſputing with you about Prophecies, but Doctrinals, and whether the plain doctrinal Part of the Apocalypſe can be defended.

Beſides what I have obſerved before concerning the mediatorial Worſhip of Saints and Angels, and Prayers for the Dead, all which are plainly founded in this Book, it is evident, that the Author confines Salvation to the *Jews* only: For when the Saints come to be mark'd and enter'd into the Book of Life, to prevent their common Deſtruction with the *Gentile* World, there are none mark'd and enter'd but *Jews*; only twelve thouſand out of each Tribe are mark'd for Life, and theſe are gathered and ſelected out of every Kindred, Tongue and Nation, where they were then ſcattered and diſperſed; but not one *Gentile* was to be ſaved. They were all to be given up to the Sword, Plague, and Famine, or ſuch Judgments by which God had determined

determined to deſtroy the fourth to make room for the fifth Monarchy; which looks very unlike converting the whole World by Argument and Reaſon, and by the Motives and Inducements of Beneficence and Love, under a Kingdom, or State of Government, that muſt depend upon inward Conviction and free Choice. But all this is very agreeable to the Nature and Genius of the *Jewiſh* Religion, in which the Knowledge and Worſhip of the true God was to be promoted and ſecured by Force and Perſecution, and by rooting out Idolatry, and deſtroying Idolaters by Fire and Sword.

It has been commonly ſaid, that the *Jewiſh* Religion and Government was a *Theocracy*; and that no Conſequences can be drawn from a Theocracy to any other mere human Forms of Government: But this ſurely muſt be a great Miſtake, for it can ſcarcely be doubted, that if God was to form any Scheme or Model of Government, it would be, in all Reſpects, the fitteſt, wiſeſt, and beſt that could be pitch'd on, and worthy to be imitated and follow'd under every other State and Conſtitution, in all human Wiſdom and Policy; to deny this would be to affront God, and in Effect to deny his Righteouſneſs and ſuperior Wiſdom. And, therefore, I hope the Patrons of the old Scheme of the *Jewiſh Law*, *Religion*, and they who would now found Chriſtianity

on *Judaiſm*, will conſider a little what they are about before they go much farther.

This was the *Jewiſh* Chriſtianity, or Chriſtian *Judaiſm*, exactly agreeable to their old *Egyptian* Superſtition, and the groſs Notions they always had of Religion; which they placed chiefly in mere external, uſeleſs Rites and Ceremonies, founded it on Force, and expected the greateſt temporal Wealth and Power, as the Reward of it from God.

When they became Chriſtians, or profeſs'd Faith in Jeſus, as their national Meſſiah, the Reſtorer of the Kingdom, or the Hope and Salvation of *Iſrael*, they did not alter their Temper, or their old Religion, in any one Particular. They ſtill expected the ſame national, temporal Deliverance, and had nothing more at Heart, than to be thoroughly revenged upon the *Gentile* World. They rejected all Overtures for an Accommodation, and reſolved to crucify a thouſand Meſſiahs, rather than take in the *Gentiles* as Partakers in the Kingdom with the primitive, elect People of God. And from hence Chriſtianity, or the Faith of Chriſt, as receiv'd and profeſs'd by them, was nothing but a political Faction among themſelves, and a new State Diviſion added to three or four more which they had before. The only Queſtion among the *Jews* at that Time, was, Whether this Jeſus was that Prince of the Houſe of *David*, who was to

to reſtore the Kingdom, and crown all the Hopes and Views which they had receiv'd from their antient Prophets? But amidſt this Debate, and national Diviſion, no Chriſtian *Jew* ever believ'd in Jeſus as the common Saviour of the World, who was to bring Mankind to Righteouſneſs and Immortality, by a new Law of his own, independent of the Ordinances of *Moſes*. Chriſt in his Life Time had many Things to ſay, which that Generation could not bear, and which muſt have eluded the whole Deſign of his divine Miſſion, had he declared it then. And the principal Thing here was, no doubt, his coming into the World, as the common Saviour of Mankind, without any Diſtinction between *Jew* and *Gentile*. And, therefore, when he began his own proper Miniſtry, after the Death of *John Baptiſt*, and ſent out his twelve Apoſtles and the Seventy, two and two, it was with an expreſs Order not to go among the *Gentiles*, or Proſelytes of the Gate, nor to enter into any of the Cities of the *Samaritans*, but to preach Repentance in his Name among the circumciſed *Jews*, and to declare that he was ſent to the *loſt Sheep of the Houſe of* Iſrael. And this expreſs Excluſion, both of the *Gentiles* and *Samaritans*, is an evident Proof, that Chriſt himſelf, while he abode on Earth, did not think it proper, or expedient, to open his Commiſſion farther; and that the Pre-

judices even of his own Apoſtles and Diſciples, and of the whole Circumciſion, in this Caſe, were invincible. And this national Prejudice they continued in for a long Time after the Reſurrection and Aſcenſion of Chriſt. They had preach'd him as their national Meſſiah, or the Reſtorer of the Kingdom to the Houſe of *David*, at leaſt five Years, to the circumciſed *Jews* only; and the Holy Ghoſt, which they had received, had not led them into any other Truth, but that the Kingdom of the Meſſiah was to be confined to the Circumciſion only. And though *Peter* afterwards, who was ſuppoſed to keep the Keys, opened the Gates of the Kingdom to the devout *Gentiles* or Proſelytes, yet neither he nor any of the reſt of theſe circumciſed Chriſtians could ever be prevail'd on to let in the Heathen *Gentiles*, without Proſelytiſm or *Jewiſh* Naturalization. This is evident from the Occaſions and Deciſions of that circumciſed Chriſtian Council, *Acts* xv. And this was the true and only Ground of all St. *Paul*'s Conflicts and Troubles with the Apoſtles and Teachers of the Circumciſion, when, by an immediate Revelation to himſelf, he came to preach Chriſt, as the common Saviour of the World, without any Regard to the Laws or Ordinances of *Moſes*. St. *Paul* ſtrenuouſly aſſerts himſelf to have been conſtituted and appointed the ſole Apoſtle of the *Gentiles*, by

a Revelation from Chriſt; he denies all Juriſdiction and Authority of the Circumciſion over them, not excepting, but expreſſly including *Peter* himſelf; he declares to the *Gentiles* whom he had converted, that he had deliver'd to them the whole Will of God, and that they were to receive no other Goſpel, or entertain no other Faith of Chriſt, but as the common Saviour of Mankind, by a new Law of his own, without any Regard to the Law of *Moſes*, or the Diſtinction between *Jew* and *Gentile*. And he moſt pathetically and earneſtly exhorts his *Gentile* Converts to ſtand by this Liberty of the true Goſpel, which he had preach'd to them, againſt all the *Judaizers*, or circumciſed Chriſtians in the World. And this was the vaſt Difference between the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* Chriſtians at firſt, and in the Apoſtolical Age itſelf, That one believ'd in and receiv'd Chriſt, as the Hope and Salvation of *Iſrael* only, or as the Reſtorer of their Kingdom; and the other as the Hope and Salvation of all Men alike, without Regard to any ſuch fifth Monarchy, or temporal *Jewiſh* Kingdom.

Theoph. This was a very wide Difference indeed; and at this Rate the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile* Chriſtianity, or *Peter*'s Religion and *Paul*'s, were as oppoſite and inconſiſtent as Light and Darkneſs, Truth and Falſhood. But, if this had been the Caſe, pray, how came

came the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, ſo ſoon afterwards, to unite into one Catholick, Chriſtian Church?

Philal. Their Perſecutions drove them together; and particularly that firſt and bloody Perſecution under *Nero*, as well as thoſe that follow'd, in which the *Gentile* Chriſtians were puniſh'd as *Jews:* For when the *Gentile* Converts found, that the Heathen *Gentiles* were their common Enemies, they united with the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians, to the great Advantage of *Judaiſm* in the Chriſtian Church. They ſeparated from the Heathen *Gentiles*, as the *Jews* had always done before, and ſo became *Jewiſh* Proſelytes, which had been the chief Thing in Diſpute. They likewiſe came into the Notion of the fifth Monarchy, or a temporal *Jewiſh* Kingdom, by the ſudden Coming of Chriſt from Heaven, to deſtroy the *Roman* Empire, and to ſet up his own Kingdom at *Jeruſalem*. And the *Gentile* Chriſtians being thus far reconciled to the Chriſtian *Jews*, they join'd with them likewiſe in ſetting up a Hierarchy in the Church, or an external, viſible Authority and Juriſdiction over Conſcience in Matters of Religion and eternal Salvation. This Hierarchy they call'd the true, viſible, Catholick Church, out of which there could be no Salvation. They aſſum'd all the extraordinary Gifts and Powers of the Apoſtles, to caſt out Devils, and to give the Holy Ghoſt.

Nay, they aſſum'd and claim'd the ſole Prerogative of God himſelf, and not only to give the Holy Ghoſt in its miraculous Power, but to convey the ſaving Grace, and ſanctifying Spirit of God too. They pretended, by their Conſecrations and prieſtly Authority, to inſpire and indue the Elements in the two Sacraments with ſupernatural and divine Virtue, ſo as to enable them to illuminate and purify the Mind, by their authoritative Application, as their natural Qualities acted upon the Body by ſtrengthening, invigorating, and nouriſhing it. And the Efficacy of all this they declared to depend on their Adminiſtrations, and the regular Succeſſion of their Biſhops fom the Apoſtles. They excluded all Hereticks, or Diſſenters and Proteſtants, who would not ſubmit to this Church Authority, or Antichriſtian Hierarchy, out of the Kingdom of Heaven; and declared epiſcopal Diſobedience to be not only a damnable, but unpardonable Sin, never to be expiated, even by the Blood of Martyrdom.

This was the primitive, Catholick Church in the firſt three Centuries; and how far it differed from the preſent *Roman Catholick* Church, I may leave any one to judge. For though our modern Catholicks may eſpouſe and maintain many Abſurdities and falſe Doctrines, which the moſt antient Catholicks did not; yet the Nature of their Hierarchy, and Powers which they claim, are both the ſame.

I muſt, therefore, maintain the Pope and his Clergy to be the true Succeſſors of theſe primitive, perſecuting Catholicks.

Theoph. You have here run a very ſtrange and moſt invidious Compariſon. But it is wonderful, methinks, that the whole Catholick Church, ſo ſoon after the Apoſtles, and even their immediate Succeſſors, ſhould fall into ſuch a general Apoſtaſy and State of Antichriſtianity!

Philal. You are miſtaken to think, that the Catholicks were then the *whole Church*, or the *beſt Chriſtians*, any more than they are now. They called themſelves the *Catholick Church*, becauſe they were the *Majority*, and becauſe they had Impudence enough, upon the Strength of this Majority, to claim a univerſal Authority over the Conſciences of all Chriſtians. They pretended to be the true and only rightful Succeſſors of the Apoſtles, by a viſible, regular, and uninterrupted lineal Deſcent. They aſſumed all the ordinary and extraordinary Gifts and Powers of the Apoſtles, and particularly *Peter*'s Power of the Keys, to let Men into, or ſhut them out of the Church of Chriſt, and Kingdom of Heaven, as they thought fit, under the Direction of the Holy Ghoſt. They made themſelves the only authoritative Interpreters, and executive Judges of the Laws of Chriſt. They pronounced all, who rejected their Authority and Juriſdiction over Conſcience, to be for ever excluded

excluded out of the Kingdom of Heaven; and this epiſcopal Diſobedience they declared to be not only a damnable, but an unpardonable Sin: Theſe were the reaſonable Demands, and righteous Claims of the moſt antient *Catholicks:* But, at the ſame Time, there were great Numbers of Diſſenters and Proteſters againſt this Antichriſtian Claim of ſpiritual Power, and who ſtrenuouſly aſſerted and maintained the Liberty of Conſcience, and Right of private Judgment, upon St. *Paul*'s Scheme, againſt any ſuch general and enormous Apoſtaſy, and Depravation of all Religion, by a Power claim'd from *Peter*. But theſe truly primitive Chriſtians, who maintained Liberty of Conſcience, and the Right of private Judgment, againſt theſe pretended, authoritative Catholicks, were branded as Hereticks, called in Deriſion by the general Name of *Gnoſticks*, becauſe they pretended to be wiſer than the Church, and claimed a Right of judging for themſelves; for which Inſolence and Rebellion they were doom'd to eternal Damnation, without any Hope or Poſſibility of Pardon. That this Catholick, anathematizing Church was the perſecuting, idolatrous, Antichriſtian Church, as ſoon as they had got the temporal Power, is paſt all Diſpute, by the cruel Work and horrible Slaughters which they made of Hereticks or Diſſenters, in the fourth Century; and which holy Method of ſaving Souls, and converting

ing Men to the true Faith, the holy, visible Catholick Church has pursued ever since. And from all this, they have prov'd that their Antichristian Kingdom, or visible Catholick, authoritative Church had subsisted before Mr. *Whiston*'s Date by several hundred Years; and that St. *Paul* was not in the wrong, when he declared it commenced in his Time; and that it would be more fully and compleatly revealed and established as soon as *he* [*this Apostle himself*] *who then hindered it, should be taken out of the Way.* This is the plain and natural Construction of St. *Paul*'s Words and Sense; and all History, from that Time to this, has confirm'd it.

Theoph. I find you take the *Jewish* Christianity to be the Antichristian Hierarchy, or external, visible, and mere human Jurisdiction over Conscience, in Matters of outward Profession and Practice; and the true Religion and Gospel of Christ, as reveal'd to, and preach'd by St. *Paul*, and embraced then and afterwards by his Disciples and Followers, you suppose to consist of Liberty of Conscience, and the Right of private Judgment, and in sincerely obeying the Will of God, as it shall appear to a Man after his own impartial Enquiry, without regarding the Authority or Judgment of others: As all true and acceptable Religion must be founded in inward Coviction, and free Choice.

Philal.

Philal. You take the Matter perfectly right; and while you keep to this Diſtinction, you can never confound the two oppoſite States and Kingdoms of Chriſt and Antichriſt. You will find, through the whole Courſe of Story, from the very Apoſtolick Age, that the Hierarchical Biſhops and Clergy, with their Party and Adherents, by pretending to be the *Catholick Church*, and to have received the Power of the Keys, or the Right of ſaving and damning from St. *Peter*; aſſum'd a Dominion over Conſcience, lorded it over God's Heritage, and claim'd and exerciſed a Power abſolutely inconſiſtent with private Judgment, rational Enquiry, and free Choice in Matters of Religion: And this they did under the Pretence of a ſacred, ſecret Depoſition left with themſelves, and derived to them by an uninterrupted, regular, viſible, and lineal Succeſſion of Biſhops from St. *Peter*. And tho' they could never prove, by any authentick Evidence, that *Peter* ever was at *Rome*, or that his apoſtolical Office and Character would admit of his being Biſhop there; yet they built the *Roman* Eccleſiaſtical Hierarchy, upon this moſt abſurd and ſenſeleſs Suppoſition. But ſtill, it muſt be own'd, that this hierarchical Form of Government in the Church did not begin at *Rome:* It began at *Antioch* in *Syria*, which was the Mother Church of *Chriſtendom*, till the Converſion of the *Roman* Emperors ſhut her out, and ſubſtituted *Rome* and *Conſtan-*

Conſtantinople in her Place. But ſtill you will find the ſame hierarchical Antichriſtian Scheme in the Apocalypſe, the Apoſtolical Conſtitutions, and the Epiſtles of *Ignatius*, from the Days of that famous Saint and Protomartyr to the Hierarchy, to the renown'd Biſhop of *R------r*, and the celebrated Dr. *Sa----el.* A Period of above ſixteen hundred Years; and which has been ſufficient to give the World abundant Proofs and Samples of the wiſe and righteous Government of the holy, viſible Catholick Church. The very ſame Church that governed *Chriſtendom* by an Antichriſtian, uſurped Authority over Conſcience at firſt, maintained their Dominion afterwards, by the *Roman* Imperial Power: And having obtained this, they opened another Scene in the fourth Century, by cruſhing all Diſſenters, ſhutting up their Churches, and purſuing them to Death, and thereby ruining more Chriſtian Families, and ſhedding more Chriſtian Blood in ſixty Years, than the *Roman Pagan* Emperors had done in three hundred. In all which, they made it evidently appear, that they aim'd more at their own temporal Wealth and Dominion, than at promoting the ſpiritual Kingdom of Chriſt.

Theoph. You talk very ſeverely of this holy, viſible Catholick Church; eſpecially as you date it ſo very early as from the Time of *Ignatius*, and the Apoſtolick Conſtitutions. That the Catholick Biſhops and Clergy ſoon fell

fell into a great and general Apoſtaſy, after they had got the temporal Power into their Hands, and could make the Emperors their Executioners and Hang-men, is very true: But I know not what temporal Wealth and Power they could aim at before, unleſs it were the worldly Riches and Dominion of Martyrdom.

Philal. You are miſtaken. They had a Chance to eſcape Martyrdom, but they had no Chance to eſcape worldly Wealth and Power, while they abſolutely governed the Conſciences of their Catholick-believing Adherents: For though the Church was not then ſo rich or numerous, yet Men would give any Thing elſe in their Power for their Souls, to thoſe who had the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and could ſave or damn at their Pleaſure. It is certain, that a Biſhoprick was a good Thing, and that there had been great Contentions and Squabbles for it, long before the Emperors had ſo vaſtly inrich'd and endow'd the Churches. And tho' the primitive Biſhops could not govern the *World*, yet they governed and fleeced their *own Flocks*. This was enough to make them richer and happier than the poor People, who were as liable to Martyrdom as they, and much more deſirous of it, as they could have no great Matter to expect in this Life, where they muſt be firſt ſtript and fleeced by their ſpiritual Paſtors, and then burnt or de-

vour'd by wild Beaſts, as the Reward of their Conſtancy and Patience. Theſe Catholick Biſhops and Clergy made the People believe, that they had infinitely better ſubmit to the moſt agonizing and torturous Death, than to withdraw their Obedience from them, and turn Diſſenters, Proteſtants, or Hereticks and Schiſmaticks; in which Caſe they had nothing to expect but eternal Damnation, without any Hope of Pardon, or Poſſibility of the leaſt Mercy from God. This was their horrible and tremendous Scheme of Church Power in the three firſt Centuries, which theſe truly primitive Catholicks ſtrengthened and improved afterwards, with all the additional Terrors of this World, and all the Antichriſtian Abuſe of civil Power.

Theoph. Methinks, you have almoſt brought me out of Conceit with the holy, viſible, Catholick, hierarchical Church, from firſt to laſt. I muſt own, that I had always had a very bad Opinion of thoſe antient Sectaries, or Diſſenters, whom theſe primitive Catholicks condemned as Hereticks. And, indeed, many of them muſt have entertain'd Principles and Notions groſſly abſurd and immoral, if the Teſtimony of thoſe moſt antient Catholicks is to be taken upon any Credit.

Philal. But would you thus take the Teſtimony of Enemies now? Suppoſe all the Proteſtant Writings to be loſt and deſtroy'd, and that future Generations were to take the Characters,

Characters, Opinions, and Conduct of the Proteſtants and Diſſenters of this and ſome former Ages, from the Popiſh Writers only, and the Accounts which they would give of them: Would you think this a fair Repreſentation, or that any Truth could be from hence derived? It may be true enough that theſe antient Proteſtants, Diſſenters and Sectaries, might many of them maintain abſurd and idle Notions, which is certainly the Caſe at this Day; but this could never give the Catholicks, or hierarchical Clergy, any Authority or Juriſdiction over their Conſciences, or juſtify them in ſending Men to the Devil without Mercy, and without giving them Leave to think and judge for themſelves. They called the Diſſenters and Proteſtants of that Time in general *Gnoſticks*, as pretending to a ſuperior Wiſdom, and a Right of judging for themſelves, againſt the Authority of the Church. They branded all Diſſenters at that Time, as being the Diſciples of *Simon Magus*, though they might, with equal Juſtice, have deriv'd them from *Potiphar* Prieſt of *On*, or the *Egyptian* Magicians. But, in ſhort, the grand Hereſy, and in which all the ſeparate Parties at that Time agreed, was denying the Authority of the Church, and pleading the Liberty of Conſcience, and Right of private Judgment, againſt the Majority. As ſuch Proteſters and Separatiſts diſclaim'd, with one Voice, any

outward, temporal Jurisdiction over Conscience, and charged the Catholicks with *Judaizing* and keeping up the Authority of the old Law, or the *Jewish* Principle of a persecuting Power.

Theoph. But, surely, these Hereticks, whom you will have to be the Protestants and Dissenters of those Times, and the only People who asserted and maintained true Christian Liberty, and opposed the growing Exorbitance of Church Power, were most of them Idolaters, and join'd with the Heathens, not only in common Eating and Drinking, Cohabitation and Inter-marriages, but even in publick Festivals, or Sacrifices instituted in Honour, and to the Memory of their Idols and false Gods; at which Solemnities they were invoked and worshipped as their Protectors, Guardians, and Deliverers. And when the Catholicks charged them with this scandalous and criminal Practice, they endeavoured to excuse and justify themselves by declaring, that they received it only as common Food, and to its natural Uses, without any Faith in, or mental Adoration of the Idol.

Philal. What you here observe, was, I believe, true, at least with respect to many of the Parties and Sects of those Separatists; but then, their Plea for it was very just and reasonable, and plainly grounded on St. *Paul*'s Doctrine and Declarations in this very Case.

This

This Apoſtle declares, that the Idol was nothing to him as to his own Judgment and Conſcience, and the Meat offered to him no more than common Food. He ſaid, indeed, that he would abſtain from it rather than offend a weak Brother, or tempt others to do a Thing againſt their Conſciences, or with a ſcrupulous Conſcience; but was not for Mens abſtaining from it merely to humour the imperious, domineering *Judaizers*, or becauſe they declared and pronounced it ſinful. In this Senſe St. *Paul* allow'd and juſtify'd the Practice in his *Gentile* Converts, and ſtood to it as long as he liv'd againſt the whole Circumciſion, and all the *Judaizers* in the Chriſtian Church. In this, therefore, theſe Hereticks or Separatiſts only maintained that Liberty which their great Apoſtle, Father, and Founder, had eſtabliſhed them in, and exhorted them to hold faſt. And while they could not be charged with any Vice, Immorality, or moral Wickedneſs, and were more peaceable and loyal Subjects than the Catholicks themſelves; this only ſhews that theſe pretended Catholicks were the true *Judaizers*, and that they had even then laid the Foundation of that enormous Antichriſtian Power and Kingdom, which ſucceeded and was built upon it. And if one was to enter farther into the Character of the Catholicks of thoſe Times, one ſhould find it exactly anſwering to St. *Paul*'s Myſtery of Iniquity

then working, and to his own Deſcription of that Antichriſtian Power and Dominion under the Man of Sin, or Son of Perdition, which was then juſt ready to be revealed. Theſe Catholicks aſſum'd all the extraordinary Gifts and Powers of the Apoſtles themſelves, and pretended to caſt out Devils, to cure all Manner of Diſeaſes, and to convey the Holy Ghoſt, as the Apoſtles did. They aſſum'd the Throne of God in their uſurped Dominion over Conſcience, and claim'd a Power of the Keys, to open or ſhut the Gates of the Kingdom authoritatively, and as they thought fit, ſince they themſelves were to be the ſole Judges. And they ſupported this moſt impious Claim of Authority by *falſe Miracles and lying Wonders, in all the Deceivableneſs of Unrighteouſneſs*. *Tertullian*, in his Time, about the End of the ſecond Century, challenges the Heathens to bring any of their Incurables, their Poſſeſs'd, their Lunaticks, Epilepticks, *&c.* into their Aſſemblies; and if they did not reſtore them, they ſhould then throw them to the wild Beaſts, or do what they pleaſed with them. This is, indeed, a bold and ſurprizing Challenge, to take it as it lies. But the Truth of the Matter was, that they could work theſe Miracles only on themſelves, and their own Confederates; for could they have made ſuch Cures among the Heathens, they might ſoon have convinced and converted them.

But

But the Impoſture having been detected, expoſed them to the greater Indignation and Contempt, till they had got the temporal Power on their Side, and brought the Emperors themſelves into the Cheat; and then they made thorough Work of it, and ſet the whole believing and aſtoniſh'd World a gazing on their prieſtly Juggles, and lying Wonders.

Theoph. You have here ſtrangely turned the Tables between the primitive Catholicks and Hereticks. For my own Part, I am not ſufficiently verſed in the Story to talk upon it now; and muſt, therefore, leave you to the Correction of our modern Catholick and orthodox Clergy, if you are miſtaken. But the great and main Queſtion ſtill remains undecided: And that is, wherein Chriſtianity conſiſts, or how a Man may know whether he be truly and really a Chriſtian or not? And here, I muſt tell you, that the general Principle of Sincerity will by no Means do. *Sincerity*, without *Truth*, can be no *Religion* at all, either natural or reveal'd. If Chriſtianity, therefore, be any Religion at all, it muſt contain ſome Truth or Truths, as neceſſary and eſſential to it, and without the Belief and Practice of which no Man can be a Chriſtian. But, ſurely, we live, methinks, in a ſtrange World, where every Body is crying up Chriſtianity as the moſt excellent Religion, while no Body can tell us

what it is! All that go under the ſame common Denomination cannot, I am ſure, be really Chriſtians, in any proper, determinate Senſe of the Name, while they are continually excommunicating and damning one another, and eternally diſputing about their own Fundamentals. And tho' they may do this never ſo ſincerely, yet that cannot prove, that they are any of them *Chriſtians*, or that they ſo much as know what they mean by the *Word*.

Philal. You know, *Theophanes*, that I am a profeſs'd Chriſtian Deiſt. And, therefore, I muſt take Chriſtianity, as to the Subſtance and doctrinal Parts of it, to be a Revival of the Religion of Nature; in which the ſeveral Duties and Obligations of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs are more clearly ſtated and explained, enforced by ſtronger Motives, and encouraged with the Promiſes of more effectual Aids and Aſſiſtances by Jeſus Chriſt, the great Chriſtian Prophet, than ever had been done before by any other Prophet, Moraliſt, or Lawgiver in Religion. And, I am the more confirm'd in this Notion of Chriſtianity, by obſerving, that they who have gone a contrary Way, and endeavoured to make up a Religion different from the Religion of Nature, and conſiſting in ſpeculative Opinions, doubtful Diſputations, external Rituals, arbitrary Laws, and mere poſitive Inſtitutions, which have no intrinſick Goodneſs in them, and

and no natural Connexion with moral Truth and Righteouſneſs; that theſe Schematiſts, I ſay, have never been able to find any Reſting-Place for the Soals of their Feet, but have been continually dividing and inflaming the World about the very Eſſentials and Fundamentals of Chriſtianity, as you have very juſtly and ſeaſonably obſerv'd. After all the learned Contentions and bloody Perſecutions of above ſixteen hundred Years, Chriſtianity is ſtill an *Individuum Vagum*, an *Ens Rationis*, or a Thing always to be talk'd of, but never underſtood. But, I do not think that Chriſtianity is in itſelf ſuch a myſterious, unintelligible Thing. Chriſtianity does not ſo much depend upon Miracles and Prophecies, or on the Senſe and Conſtruction of antient Authors, writ in Languages that we do not well underſtand, and often in a very obſcure Stile, from Occaſions and under Circumſtances, that we cannot be ſufficiently appriz'd of to be always certain of their Meaning, or even ſo as not to be often left under the greateſt Doubts and Uncertainties: But the Chriſtian Religion rather depends on the moſt plain and neceſſary Truths, ſuch as are founded in the eternal, immutable Reaſon and Fitneſs of Things; and which muſt, therefore, be always and every where the ſame. The Religion of Jeſus conſiſts in the inward, ſpiritual Worſhip of one true God, by a ſtrict Regard to all the Duties and Obligations of moral

moral Truth and Righteouſneſs, in Oppoſition to all the animal Affections, and mere bodily Appetites, and to the Bent and Bias of a corrupt, degenerate World, which would draw us another Way: And all this, under the Powers and Influences of a future, inviſible World, or the firm Belief and Expectation of Immortality and eternal Life, as a free Gift and Reward from God for ſuch moral Righteouſneſs or Goſpel Obedience. And becauſe Jeſus Chriſt came into the World, and was ſent from God to reſtore, revive, and republiſh this Religion, after it had been loſt in the general Superſtition, Idolatry, and groſs Ignorance of Mankind, both *Jew* and *Gentile*; and to enforce it with ſtronger Motives, and encourage it with better Promiſes, and more effectual Aids, than ever had been done before; therefore, he is the great Prophet of our Profeſſion. And thus far, *Theophanes*, I am a Chriſtian, and at the ſame Time a Deiſt, or, if you pleaſe, this is my Chriſtian Deiſm; but as for *Moſes* and the Prophets, though I admire them, as Politicians, Hiſtorians, Orators, and Poets, I have nothing to do with them in Religion, as I cannot poſſibly be of their Religion. But as for true and real Chriſtianity, I think there could be no great Diſpute about it, if Men would only take in the Subſtance and Eſſentials of it, and either leave out, or not much inſiſt on the Circum-

Circumſtantials; of which we have but a very obſcure and imperfect Account, and that frequently not conſiſtent with itſelf, or with the Character and Deſign of the Perſon ſpoken of. In ſhort, I think it will be impoſſible for Men ever to come to any certain Rule of Faith, or Standard of Chriſtianity, while they place the Eſſentials of this Religion in any Thing elſe but the Doctrines and Duties of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs, as they were reviv'd, republiſh'd, farther explain'd, enforc'd and encourag'd by Jeſus Chriſt, as the great Prophet of this Holy Profeſſion. And it muſt the more confirm any Man in this Notion and View of Chriſtianity, who will but conſider the different Rules of Faith, and Meaſures of Judgment, which have hitherto been try'd and found ineffectual; and which have been ſo far from procuring the Peace, Unity, or Purity of the Church, that they have ſerved to no other Purpoſe, but to diſtract, divide, and inflame.

During the Apoſtolick Age, or at leaſt in the firſt and pureſt Part of it, while St. *Paul* liv'd, and his *Gentile* Churches flouriſh'd, the baptiſmal Creed or Profeſſion was thought ſufficient; in which Men were baptiz'd in the *Name*, *i. e.* into the *Faith* and *Profeſſion* of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt: In which they were openly and publickly to profeſs and declare, that they believed in one only true God

God the Father, the Almighty and omniſcient Creator, Former, Suſtainer, Governor, and Diſpoſer of all Things viſible and inviſible, whether in Heaven or Earth: In one Lord Jeſus Chriſt the Mediator between God and Man, and the great Prophet, who had fully, clearly, and moſt effectually reveal'd the Will of God for the Salvation of the World: And in one Holy Ghoſt or ſanctifying Spirit, as animating, aiding, and aſſiſting all the Faithful in purifying their Hearts, ſupporting them in all Afflictions and Trials, and encouraging and directing them in the Way of Peace, Love and Holineſs, to Immortality and eternal Life. This I take to have been the firſt, pure, Apoſtolical Creed. But ſoon after, as the *Judaizers* prevailed, upon St. *Paul*'s Death, and aſſum'd the Name and Dignity of the *Catholick Church*, they added another Article, *i. e.* that Remiſſion of Sins and Life everlaſting could only be obtain'd in and by the Holy Catholick Church, or by themſelves, and their own Adminiſtrations, as the only viſible, authoritative Executors and Truſtees of Chriſt and the Apoſtles. And this Privilege the *Judaizing* Church, or Catholicks, ſoon came to claim as an Apoſtolick Tradition, which they had receiv'd by a viſible, uninterrupted, lineal Succeſſion, and Exerciſe of Authority from the Apoſtles; and which, as they pretended, had been thus left as a ſacred Depoſitum

poſitum with them, which none of the Hereticks, Proteſtants or Separatiſts could know any Thing of, or reap any Benefit from, but in full Communion with, and Submiſſion to them. But they found that even this Plea and Rule of Faith would not long ſerve their Turn; and, therefore, they were obliged to fly to the Authority of the Church in Synods and Councils, in which a few ignorant, ſuperſtitious Biſhops meeting together in ſome ſmall Province or Corner of the World, pretended to be under the immediate Directions of the Holy Ghoſt, and to make Laws and Decretals for all *Chriſtendom*, even for ſuch as were not preſent, and conſenting, either in Perſon, or by any Delegation, and who could not, in Conſcience, ſubmit to their Authority. I ſhould have ſaid, that about this Time the Catholicks had collected a Canon of Scripture, and endeavoured to make themſelves the ſole, authoritative Interpreters of it; but finding that the Hereticks, or proteſting Recuſants would not ſubmit to any ſuch authoritative Judgment and Interpretation, they recurr'd to a new Method of Synods and Councils, in which they might ſecure and defend the Truth, by the Voice and Suffrage of a Majority. But neither did this avail much, while the Catholicks had no temporal Power in their Hands; for the Hereticks not regarding their Anathema's and Eccleſiaſtical Thunders, went on in their own Way, and thought

thought they might go to Heaven without them. And as the Hereticks, upon this Foot of Liberty, daily increaſed and grew more and more numerous, it might have proved fatal to the Catholicks, had they not got the Imperial Power on their Side before they had loſt the Majority. But when this Point had been gain'd, all went ſmoothly on for a Time; and the Hereticks, or obſtinate Sectaries and Separatiſts, in about ſixty or ſeventy Years, were deſtroyed and exterminated by the holy Zeal, and godly Diſcipline of the Catholick, infallible Church.

But this Rule of Faith, and Centre of Unity did not laſt long; for the Catholicks ſoon fell together by the Ears among themſelves, and afterwards nothing was more common than for one General, Catholick Council of Biſhops to excommunicate, anathematize and damn another; and thus the Chriſtian Biſhops and Clergy were Catholicks and Hereticks by Turns, as the Wind of Court Favour happened to blow, or as the Emperors fell in ſometimes with one Side, and ſometimes with the other. Such a Dupe and Stalking-Horſe in thoſe Days did they make of the *Holy Ghoſt*.

But after they had try'd the whole Power and Authority of theſe Councils for about three hundred Years, in which Time the Flames were blown up higher and higher, and no Peace or Unity in the Church ever like to be obtain'd; they thought of another,

and

and a new Expedient, or Rule of Faith, which they imagined muſt put an End to all Controverſies about Faith and Religion: And that was *a living, infallible Judge*, with temporal Power enough in his Hands to controul and prevent all Difference of Opinion. And here, as the Biſhops and Emperors had behaved ſo ill, and ſo little anſwered the Truſt which God had repoſed in them, the Popes wreſted the Authority out of both their Hands, aſſum'd all Power both in Heaven and Earth, and declar'd themſelves the only Vicars and Vicegerents of Chriſt upon Earth.

And this for ſeveral hundred Years had a hopeful Aſpect, and ſeem'd to promiſe fair for Peace and Unity in the Church; for it had ſcarce left ſo much as the Appearance of Religion or Conſcience in the World. Every one was content to believe as the Church believ'd, without knowing what or why. Mankind were now put into a ſaveable State of Darkneſs, in which Ignorance was the Mother of Devotion. The Chriſtian Clergy in general were ſunk into the groſſeſt and moſt ſcandalous State of moral Wickedneſs, ſuch as had never been known among the Heathens. No Man could be damn'd, but for Want of Money, and the Church had ſuch a Market, that little elſe was talk'd of but buying and ſelling of Souls. The infallible Judge aſſum'd the Crowns of Princes, and diſpos'd of their Kingdoms at Pleaſure. All that

that would not ſubmit to his infallible Deciſions in Matters of Faith, were to be burnt as Hereticks, and then given up for all Eternity to the Devil, and committed to the hotter and more outragious Fire of Hell. This was now the Chriſtian Rule of Faith, and the Holy Catholick Method of converting and ſaving Souls.

In all this, Damnation was the great and uſeful Engine, by which they wrought upon the Superſtition and Fears of their implicite Believers. Nothing leſs than the eternal Torments of Hell could be the Portion of thoſe who refuſed Obedience to the Church, or queſtioned her Authority and Juriſdiction over Conſcience. But in this Doctrine, they contradicted Scripture as much as they did Reaſon, and repreſented God, contrary to his Nature, and all his Attributes, as an almighty, implacable, mercileſs Revenger, merely to gratify their own Malice and Luſt of Power. A moſt horrid and diabolical Notion, which they took from the wicked, revengeful *Jews*, and which was not at all founded in any Thing that Chriſt or the Apoſtles had ſaid of it.

It is true, that the Fire which is utterly to conſume, deſtroy, and burn up the wicked in the laſt Day, is called everlaſting Fire, becauſe its Effects will be everlaſting, and there can be no poſſible Recovery from this ſecond Death. And thus the Fire which conſumed

conſumed the Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, is called everlaſting Fire, becauſe thoſe Cities were deſtroyed for ever, never to be reſtored more. And thus this laſt deſtroying Fire is ſaid to be unquenchable, becauſe no Power or Policy can extinguiſh it, or deliver the Ungodly out of it, till it has utterly conſumed and deſtroyed the Subject. But, that the ſecond Death, which wicked Men muſt undergo after they have been raiſed, and received their Sentence, ſhould be an eternal Life in Torments, without ever dying more; that a conſuming and deſtroying, ſhould be an unconſuming, immortalizing Fire; that the mortal and corruptible Bodies with which the wicked ſhall be rais'd, ſhould be immortal and uncorruptible, which is the ſole Privilege of the Juſt; that eternal Death and utter Deſtruction ſhould ſignify Immortality, and eternal Life in Miſery; and that when the profeſs'd End and Deſign of Chriſt's Coming into the World, was to deſtroy the Devil and his Kingdom, and all his Works, and to aboliſh and put an End to Sin and Death for ever; that he ſhould in the Event come to eſtabliſh the Devil's Empire for ever in Hell over the far greater Part of Mankind, and to perpetuate and immortalize Sin and Hell, inſtead of extirpating and deſtroying them: Theſe are ſuch groſs and glaring Contradictions, as cannot be reconciled to the natural Uſe of Words in any Language. And

yet when this Doctrine ſhall be given up as altogether unſcriptural, as well as falſe, impoſſible, and contradictory in itſelf, the holy, Catholick, Antichriſtian Church muſt loſe her main Pillar and Support. And I wiſh that ſome of our Proteſtant, Orthodox Clergy may not find themſelves at a little Loſs. But, ſurely, the hierarchical Clergy in general, if they would retain any Thing of their ſpiritual Dominion and Juriſdiction over Conſcience, muſt ſtand up ſtrenuouſly for the Devil, and maintain, with all their Might, the Perpetuity of his Power and Kingdom. But this I muſt own as a Digreſſion, tho' it happened to fall ſo naturally in my Way, that I could not well avoid it.

Theoph. I am very glad, *Philalethes*, that it did fall in your Way. It is a very important Point, and if it could be thoroughly cleared up, it might ſerve to reſolve moſt of the Difficulties that have hitherto been raiſed about the Conduct of Providence in general, or the Chriſtian Religion in particular. But, I muſt aſk your Pardon for this Interruption. I would not hold you long from the Thread of your Diſcourſe; and, therefore, pray go on with your Rule of Faith.

Philal. I am ready to oblige you, *Theophanes*, ſo far as I can; and, therefore, you may obſerve, that after this Catholick Rule of Faith, the perſecuting, Antichriſtian Power of the Church had prevail'd for many hundred

dred Years, to the Purpoſes as before-mentioned, ſome great and bold Men, at length, in ſeveral Parts of *Europe*, began to conſider, that this could never be the right Way to Salvation, and that theſe infallible Judges muſt certainly have miſtaken the Rule of Faith. Upon which they reſolv'd to attempt a Reformation, by returning again to the old Canon of Scripture. But herein they were not ſo happy, as could be wiſh'd, ſince they ſet up the Scriptures in groſs in its Prophecies, Hiſtories, and Morals without Exception, as a *dead, infallible Rule*, in Oppoſition to a *living, infallible Judge*. But then, when they had got this infallible Rule fairly tranſlated into their own Language, they could not infallibly underſtand and apply it; which made it, to all Intents and Purpoſes, a fallible Rule to them, and a Noſe of Wax, which they could form and model according to their Pleaſure. And this left as much Room for Diviſions and Diſputes as before: Which has accordingly happened among the Proteſtants themſelves, while they have been continually wrangling, dividing and ſubdividing, excommunicating and damning one another, even about the Eſſentials and Fundamentals of Chriſtianity. And from hence they have demonſtrated to the whole World, that they are ſo far from having an infallible Rule, that they have, in Effect, no certain, determinate or intelligible Rule at all. The Diſpute, there-

fore, between Papiſts and Proteſtants hitherto, has been generally not about *Infallibility* itſelf, but the *Subject* of it: Not whether every Man may not be infallibly and indubitably certain in Matters of hiſtorical Faith, but how he ſhall come by it.

But there was one great Unhappineſs, which attended the Proteſtant Reformation at firſt, that the leading Men engaged in it, introduced a moſt ſtrange and monſtrous Scheme of Doctrinals, and pleaded the infallible Rule for the Truth of them; while they were neither contain'd in Scripture, nor ſo much as poſſible in the Nature and Reaſon of Things. Some of theſe they had before implicitly receiv'd from the Authority of the Church, and continued to eſpouſe and maintain without farther Examination; and others they invented and coin'd afterwards, and then endeavoured to ſupport both, by the Infallibility of Scripture; and between the one and the other, they patch'd up a Syſtem of Chriſtian Faith, which, perhaps, was the moſt abſurd and unintelligible, that ever had been advanced in the World. And this gave the learned *Jeſuites* a great Advantage over them, and put a Stop to the Reformation, which otherwiſe, in all Probability, muſt have prevail'd univerſally, had it been put upon the true Foot of Scripture and Reaſon.

Our

Our first Reformers unanimously maintain'd, that God was three distinct Persons, or intelligent Agents, and that the one Creator and Governor of the World was three Creators and Governors of the World, not, indeed, separately and divided, but conjunctly and undivided. They taught and maintain'd, that Jesus of *Nazareth*, or the Man born of the Virgin, was really no human Person, or had no human Personality or Agency at all; but that he was personally God most high, or the very supreme Being himself; and that consequently his human Body and Soul did not constitute a human Person or Agent, but was only the Organ, or passive Instrument of God's acting by the Power of the Holy Ghost. They asserted and maintain'd, that if Christ had not been the supreme God, he could not have made an infinite Satisfaction for Sin, or have suffered infinite Pains and Penalties; which yet was necessary to the Pardon of Sin, and without which, God could not, upon any Condition or Consideration at all, have shewn the least Mercy, or extended the least Compassion to his Creatures. They taught and asserted in the strongest Terms, that Men must be justify'd and accepted of God, by Faith in Christ without Gospel Obedience; and that it was damnable Presumption to expect or hope for any Favour from God in Consequence, or on the Condition of the

moſt ſincere Obedience and perſonal Righteouſneſs in a Man's Power; So groſſly did theſe new Reaſoners upon Scripture miſunderſtand St. *Paul*'s Doctrine of Juſtification by Faith without Works, or by Goſpel Obedience in Oppoſition to the external Rituals and carnal Inſtitutions of the *Moſaick* Law; which latter is what this Apoſtle always means by *Works*, or the *Works of the Law*, whenever he excludes them from any Share or Concern in the Buſineſs of Salvation and Juſtification with God. They taught and maintain'd, that the Faith enjoin'd by the Goſpel was no Part of our Obedience, or no human Act at all, but an immediate Effect and Operation of the Spirit upon the paſſive Mind, as an Inſtrument of apprehending, receiving, and applying Chriſt to the Soul. They taught and inſiſted on it, as a Matter of the greateſt Importance, that no Man could do any Thing towards his own Salvation, and that it was damnable Preſumption for any one to pretend to it; but that Sanctification, as well as Election, and Juſtification, were immediate Acts of God, without any human Concurrence; and that all ſuch, who were, beyond all Compariſon, the far greater Part of Mankind, that had not been thus elected from all Eternity, and ſanctify'd in Time, by irreſiſtible Grace, muſt periſh everlaſtingly without Hope or Remedy. In ſhort, they ſet aſide all Nature and

and Reaſon for an unintelligible, contradictory Faith, which muſt now be the Standard of Scripture itſelf, and the infallible Rule and Teſt of Chriſtian Orthodoxy; by which they diſmounted the Pope, and advanced themſelves to the Throne.

I have mention'd nothing here, but what our firſt Reformers inſiſted on and declar'd as fundamental and neceſſary, and without which they would not receive Men to their Communion, or own them as Brethren; and by which 'tis plain, that Men's ſhutting their Eyes, and quitting their Underſtandings in Matters of Faith, was then the true orthodox Tenr, and eſſential to Chriſtianity. The Diſtinction of Fundamentals and Non-Fundamentals had prov'd of great and excellent Uſe till of late; but ſince theſe Fundamentals themſelves came to be diſputed, and many of them thrown off by Scripture Authority, the Matter of hiſtorical Faith was very much perplex'd, till ſome Men, wiſer than the reſt, thought of a new Teſt of Religion and Orthodoxy, which had never been propoſed and taken in before; and that is SINCERITY.

Whoever ſearches after the Mind and Will of God in Nature and Scripture impartially, and then acts according to his beſt Light, and the Meaſure of his Capacity upon ſuch an Inquiry, is ſincere, and conſequently orthodox, and in a State of Salvation. Now

this, I think, is certainly true and indiſputable; but then, perhaps, it may be too indefinite and general. For it is no more a Rule or Teſt in any one Scheme, or Syſtem of hiſtorical Faith, than another; or it has no more Relation to Chriſtianity, than to any other Diſpenſation; for at this Rate, a *Jew*, a *Mahometan*, a *Perſian*, *Indian*, or *Chineſe*, may be equally ſincere with the beſt Chriſtian, and as much in Favour of God. But this will never do as a Rule of Chriſtian Orthodoxy, ſince it is a Meaſure that may be apply'd to all Nations and Religions alike; and yet, perhaps, it is the only true Rule or Meaſure of Religion, that ever was, or ever can be thought of. But an external, viſible Rule or Teſt of true, internal Faith and Religion, farther than what may be judged of, or concluded from a Man's outward, moral Practice and Behaviour, has been ever the Device of ſuch as would aſſume the Prerogative of God, and who would vainly extend their Juriſdiction beyond their Cognizance.

Theoph. You labour hard to ſet aſide and explode all hiſtorical Faith and Religion, as you call it, that is, all reveal'd Religion; for you can mean nothing elſe by it. But ſtill I hope you will admit of ſome Religion, as neceſſary, and that the Chriſtian Religion, which you ſay is the beſt in the World, muſt have ſome external, viſible Rule of Judgment, whereby

whereby to diſtinguiſh between ſuch as are, or are not, viſibly and externally at leaſt, Chriſtians.

Philal. No doubt but ſome ſuch Rule of external Faith, Profeſſion and Practice might be eaſily contriv'd and thought on; but then the Chriſtian Clergy hitherto muſt have been very thoughtleſs People, who could never yet contrive, or think of any ſuch Rule. The beſt Teſt or Standard of Chriſtianity, and of all Religion, ever yet advanced, which is *Sincerity*, has not been ſufficient to diſtinguiſh ſincere Chriſtians from ſincere Perſons of any other Religion. But as to this Matter you need not be in much Pain, ſince every Chriſtian Church can make and ſettle their own Terms of Communion, and either admit or exclude whom they pleaſe: But if Men do not think their Communion to be the Church Catholick, or a neceſſary Introduction to the Kingdom of Heaven, you muſt leave every Man, in this Caſe, to his own Judgment of Diſcretion, and then no Harm can be done; for if I will not be ſaved in your Way, it is impoſſible that you ſhould compel me to it, and therefore you ought to leave me, as well as yourſelf, to a fair Chance of being either ſaved or damn'd.

Theoph. All this is Ranting, mere Evaſion and Impertinence. The Queſtion is, Whether Chriſtianity, in your Opinion, be any Thing or Nothing; and whether it has any external,

external, cognizable Rule of Judgment, or not? Muſt I receive and communicate with all Perſons promiſcuouſly, who appear to be Men of natural Probity, and who act up to the Principles of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs; or am I not obliged to diſtinguiſh in this Caſe, and to communicate with ſome Perſons as Chriſtians, and not with others?

Philal. This will be a very hard Queſtion to me, till you tell me what you here mean by Chriſtian Communion. If you mean the Unity, Fellowſhip, and Communion of all Mankind, upon the common Principles of Reaſon and Religion; this will be one Thing: But if you mean any particular Party Intereſt, private Confederacy, or national Encloſure, not founded upon the common Principles of Humanity, Religion, and Reaſon; that will be a quite different Thing.

Theoph. I only want to know whether there is any external Diſtinction in human Judgment, between Chriſtianity and other Religions, or not; or whether any ſuch Diſtinction, in your Opinion, can or ought to be kept up? And here you can have no Occaſion to quibble or evade, but to tell me what, in your Opinion, Chriſtianity really is, Whether it be any Thing or nothing; and whether there be any Criterion or Diſtinction between this and other Religions?

Philal. You ſeem to preſs this Matter very cloſe, and yet I have told you my Opinion about it already; that Jeſus Chriſt, as I think, has given us the beſt Account of the Nature, Attributes, and Will of God, of any other Prophet or Lawgiver in the World: And, therefore, I am a Chriſtian in Contradiction to any other hiſtorical Religion; or a Diſciple of Chriſt in Oppoſition to *Moſes*, *Zoroaſtres*, *Confucius*, *Mahomet*, or any other Reformer in Religion. But if you would have one believe and ſwallow by wholeſale, and ingroſs every Thing that has been written in any hiſtorical Books of Religion, I muſt take Leave to beg your Pardon, and to let you know, that in this Senſe, I am of no Religion at all; or which is the ſame Thing, I am no implicit Believer, and cannot receive any hiſtorical Facts, eſpecially ſuch as are extraordinary and miraculous, as infallibly true. You need not preſs me for my Opinion, ſince I am as free to give it, as you can be to aſk it: And I do not take you for an Inquiſitor, becauſe I am ſure you are no Prieſt, and, I think, no prieſtly Tool.

Theoph. I beg your Pardon, *Philalethes*, if I have made too free. I did not deſign to warm you; but ſtill I muſt inſiſt upon your Definition or Deſcription of Chriſtianity, which, I think, you have promiſed, or given me at leaſt ſome Expectation of, though you have not made good your Word. If you had

had thought me a Party Zealot, I believe you would not have honoured me with ſo much of your Converſation. But, I ſhould be glad to bring this Debate between us to ſome Iſſue, and to put a ſpeedy End to it, at leaſt, if we cannot agree upon the Matters in Queſtion.

Philal. You muſt exerciſe your Patience a little farther for the Concluſion of this Conference; but you have had already my Definition, Deſcription, or Account of Chriſtianity. I take, as you know, Chriſtianity to be that Scheme or Syſtem of Deiſm, natural Religion, or moral Truth and Righteouſneſs, which was at firſt preached and propagated in the World, by Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and has ſince been convey'd down to us by probable, human Teſtimony, or hiſtorical Evidence, ſtrengthened and confirm'd by the neceſſary, natural Truth, and intrinſick Goodneſs of the Doctrines themſelves. This, Sir, is Chriſtianity, and this is my reveal'd Religion. And if you have any other Chriſtianity, or reveal'd Religion, you will now declare it; for I have brought the Matter to a Point with you, and ſhall gladly join Iſſue.

Theoph. What then is the Chriſtian Revelation, is it nothing at all?

Philal. It is a Revival of the Religion of Nature, or a complete Syſtem and Tranſcript of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs; And do you think this nothing?

Theoph.

Theoph. No-body will ſay it is nothing, but many will ſay it is not ſufficient.

Philal. It is no Matter what the Many think or ſay; But pray what do you ſay or think?

Theoph. I think and ſay, that Deiſm, the Religion of Nature, or moral Truth and Righteouſneſs will never do, without ſome external Religion or Revelation to employ the Clergy, and keep up the Devotion of the common People. And I muſt think and ſay farther, that Matters of Speculation, and abſtract Truth never influence Mankind much, till they affect the Paſſions, and carry Affection with Judgment.

Philal. I am intirely of your Mind; but then the only Queſtion is, How you would have the Paſſions raiſed and moved, whether by the Nature and Reaſon of Things apply'd to the Underſtanding, or blindly and implicitly, by ſuch Senſations, as Paſſion only can feel and judge of? I can have no Opinion of the moral Effects of Actions, which are in themſelves indifferent, and which have no natural Relation to, or Connexion with the End propoſed. This is the mechanical Agency of the Spirit, or the Conveyance of Grace *ex Opere operato*, by ſome external Work done; a Point in which all *human Inventions* have ever terminated, and which muſt always diſtinguiſh them from *divine Inſtitutions*. If the Means of any Sort are not congenerate, or of the ſame Kind with the

the End, they can be no rational Means at all; and then to ſay that they are inſtituted Means, is but begging the Queſtion, and taking for granted the Thing that ought to be prov'd. To maintain that waſhing or ſprinkling with Water, or drinking Wine upon Biſket after Supper, can have any natural or moral Tendency to ſanctify the Soul or purify the Mind, would be the ſame Abſurdity, as maintaining that the Body may be fed, nouriſh'd, and ſupported by abſtract Reaſonings, Speculations, and Theorems. And the ſame may be apply'd to all other external indifferent Actions; a vaſt Number of which the Clergy have inſtituted and enforced in the Name of God, and which yet, to ſpeak the plain Truth, is no better than trifling with God, and ſo far expoſing Religion to Contempt and Ridicule. It is true, indeed, that many Actions indifferent in themſelves, or in their own general, abſtract Nature, may ceaſe to be ſo, and become neceſſary in particular Caſes and Inſtances, as they are differently related and circumſtantiated. Thus Riding, Walking, cold Bathing, a particular Diet, *&c.* how indifferent ſoever in their general, abſtract Nature, muſt ceaſe to be indifferent, when they come to be the Means of preſerving Health, removing Diſeaſes, or fitting and diſpoſing Men for any of the important Offices and Obligations of Life: But in ſuch mutable Caſes, which depend on

on the different and mutable Relations of Perſons and Things, what may be good and beneficial to one, will be hurtful and prejudicial to another, or even to the ſame Perſon at different Times, and under different Circumſtances. No general Rules or Laws therefore can be made or ſettled about ſuch Matters, unleſs it was poſſible to alter the common Courſe of Providence, and the mutable Relations of Perſons and Things, and make that fix'd and eternal, which is continually varying and changing. But I cannot yet ſet aſide the Conſideration of theſe mechanical Means of Grace, which, in my Opinion, have perplex'd and diſtracted Multitudes, but never yet inlightened the Underſtandings, and purify'd the Affections of any at all. But they who depend on them moſt, and lay the greateſt Streſs upon it, are generally left under the greateſt Doubts and Darkneſs, and have the leaſt Light, and the leaſt Comfort. People often wait upon what they call outward Ordinances, and Means of Grace, like the Cripples at the Pool of *Bethesda*, and commonly go away without a Cure, for Want of taking the critical Moment, when the Spirit, as it is ſuppoſed, might have work'd upon them effectually and inſtantaneouſly, and at once have brought them out of Darkneſs into Light, before they had been aware of it. They look upon Ordinances, and Means of Grace, as the Food and Phyſick

ſick of the Soul, and make uſe of them after the ſame Manner, expecting ſpiritual Health and Life, Nouriſhment and Growth, from the Operation of the Spirit, like the natural, mechanical Effects of Medicines upon the Blood and Humours; while, perhaps, they never uſe any Means of Grace at all, nor ſo much as know what they mean by the Word.

Religion is purely an internal Thing, and conſiſts ultimately in moral Truth and Righteouſneſs, conſidered as an inward Character, Temper, Diſpoſition, or Habit in the Mind. This moral Character, or Habit, has not been unfitly call'd the Religion of the End, ſince it is the End which all ought to aim at, as the true, moral Perfection and Happineſs of human Nature, and of every intelligent Being. And this Religion of the End differs in nothing from the Religion of the Means, but as the Habit is different from its neceſſary, correlative Acts, which mutually and reciprocally ſtrengthen, confirm, and improve each other; and, therefore, the Means in Religion have as clear and neceſſary a Relation to the End, as any natural Means can have to their proper, natural End. And as all Religion lies in the right Knowledge of God and ourſelves, in acting agreeably to the Relations we ſtand in to one another, and to the ſupreme Being, and in improving this Knowledge and Practice into an internal, a-

biding Character, Diſpoſition, and Habit, it is plain, that the great Source and Fountain of all this muſt be Attention, Contemplation, or a cloſe Application of the Mind to the moral Truth, Reaſon, and Fitneſs of Things. This is the firſt Spring and Origin of all moral Virtue, Religion, and true Happineſs. But to avoid this ſtrict Attention and Application of Mind to moral Truth and Reaſon, as too painful and laborious, Mankind have been generally befriended with ſeveral learned, mechanical Schemes and Syſtems of Faith and Religion, which they might eaſily learn and practiſe without underſtanding, and thereby be made very good and gracious, without being wiſe or reaſonable. By this Method, a competent Stock of mechanical Faith, and a ſufficient Number of mechanical Rituals, will conſtitute a very good, mechanical Religion: In which any perſonal Defects of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs may be made up, and balanced by the Redundancy of Chriſt's Righteouſneſs imputed to us, and placed to our Account, as effectually to all Intents and Purpoſes, as if we had been the perſonal Subjects of it ourſelves.

But I know it would ſignify nothing to explode Falſhood and Error, without ſetting up and ſettling the contrary Truth in its Room; this, therefore, I ſhall endeavour to do as briefly and clearly as I can. You may obſerve then, that the An-

tients call'd moral Philoſophy, or the Religion of Nature, in its Theory and Practice, *Wiſdom*, emphatically, and to diſtinguiſh it from all other Sorts of human Knowledge and Learning, which they look'd upon, comparatively, as of little Conſequence or Value. This was the Plan or Scheme of Religion, which *Solomon*, and the Author of the Book of *Eccleſiaſticus*, laid down and proceeded on; and this is the Genius that inſpired and animated St. *Paul* in all his Writings, and which he calls *the Spirit of Chriſt*, *the ſpiritual Mind*, *the new Man*, *or new Creature*, *Chriſt within us the Hope of Glory*, *the Law or Rule of Faith*, *and the Grace of God manifeſted by Jeſus Chriſt in the Goſpel*, &c. Which Metaphors are all very ſtrong and beautiful when rightly underſtood and apply'd, but this can never be done in the mechanical Way of Faith and Religion, nor till they are brought to the Teſt of moral Philoſophy. Now the Principles of this Philoſophy, divine Wiſdom, or ſpiritual Knowledge, are not in themſelves remote, abſtruſe, or at all difficult, but levelled to the Underſtandings of Mankind in general; and the Study and Practice of it requires nothing more than Men's impartially attending to, and following the Dictates and Guidance of their own Reaſon and Conſciences, againſt any Bent or Bias of the bodily or merely animal Appetites and Paſſions to the contrary; for

for theſe are two oppoſite and contrary Principles of Action in the Mind of Man, namely, the rational Pleaſure, Affection and Paſſion reſulting from the Contemplation and Love of Truth, moral Fitneſs, intellectual Beauty, Order and Proportion on the one Hand; or the brutal, animal Pleaſure, Affection or Paſſion in the Gratification of the bodily Senſes, Appetites, and Inclinations on the other. This internal Character of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs, and a conſtant, uniform Life, or Courſe of Action, flowing from it, and directed by it, every one will allow to be the Religion of the End; or at leaſt there can be no Diſpute about it among Proteſtants: But what thoſe Means are which are neceſſary to this End, and without which the End cannot be obtain'd at all, or not without great Difficulty and Hazard, has been always a diſputable Point among Chriſtians of every Denomination, and ſtill remains ſo to this Day. The modern Papiſts, indeed, who ſuppoſe all Matters of Faith and Religion to be equally neceſſary, could never diſtinguiſh between the Religion of the End, and of the Means, in the common Acceptation of it with us: But the Proteſtants found themſelves obliged to it from a Diſtinction which they had made before, between Fundamentals and Non-Fundamentals, or between Things neceſſary and not neceſſary in Matters of Faith and Religion.

But I ſhall leave theſe Gentlemen to compound and ſettle the Matter, as well as they can between themſelves, and in the mean while endeavour to ſhew, that there is a juſt and rational Diſtinction between the Religion of the End, and the Religion of the Means; and that in this Caſe, the Means are as neceſſary as the End, for otherwiſe they could be no Means at all in Contradiſtinction to any Thing elſe. *Unneceſſary Means* are fit only for an *unneceſſary Religion*, and they that will have one, ought to be content with the other.

But when Men have done diſputing about Religion, and ſaid as much as they can, I will ſtill maintain, that the Means of acquiring this moral Philoſophy, divine Wiſdom, or Art of living well, are the very ſame with the Means of obtaining any other practical Knowledge in any other Art or Science whatever; and without uſing the natural, and only neceſſary Means, it will be impoſſible, in this Caſe, or any other, ever to come at the End, unleſs God would alter the common Courſe of Nature and Providence, and teach Men to know and do Things in a miraculous Way, without their own Concurrence and Endeavours.

A Man, who would obtain the Knowledge, and make himſelf Maſter of any Art or Science, muſt apply his Mind to it with Attention and Diligence, continually and at all

all proper Times put it in Practice, ſo far as he has acquir'd it, and in the mean while take himſelf off from all ſuch Avocations to other Buſineſs or Pleaſures, that would hinder his main Purſuit, and be inconſiſtent with the End which he propoſes. This, which is neceſſary in all Acquiſitions of Knowledge and Practice, is here likewiſe neceſſary, and the only Thing that is neceſſary in the Caſe before us. The firſt Thing neceſſary to this Wiſdom, divine Science, or moral Philoſophy, is Self-Acquaintance. A Man muſt thoroughly ſtudy, and underſtand himſelf, before he can know any Thing elſe to any good Purpoſe. He muſt underſtand his own Nature, Conſtitution and Frame, as a reaſonable and ſenſitive Creature; what the different Ends and Uſes are of his Reaſon, Underſtanding, and intellectual Powers on the one Hand, and of his external Senſes, Appetites, and Paſſions on the other; what Relation he ſtands in to his Fellow-Creatures, who are of the ſame Make and Compoſition; how far he depends on them, or they upon him, and what he would expect from them upon a ſuppoſed Change of Perſons and Circumſtances. He who imagines he knows the World, and pretends to be acquainted with Mankind, while he is a Stranger to himſelf, is groſſly miſtaken, and can never know the World half ſo well, as the World will know him:

But in this Self-Contemplation, a Man will find an infinite, inexhauſtible Source and Spring of Wiſdom and Knowledge: When he conſiders the natural Conſtitution of his Mind, the various and different Faculties, Affections, Appetites, and Paſſions, both internal or intellectual, and external or ſenſible, with which he is endued; the wonderful Structure, Organization, and Mechaniſm of his Body in all its Parts and Members; and the neceſſary, mutual Relation of all theſe to one another, contrived and adjuſted for the Good and Self-Preſervation of the whole compound Syſtem.

Let our Moraliſt now look without him, and contemplate the vaſt ſtupendous Fabrick of the Heavens and Earth; and here on this Globe in which he lives, he will ſee an innumerable Family of Creatures raiſed up and provided for, by an unſeen Hand, and contrived and placed in a mutual Dependence on, and a neceſſary Relation to each other, by an inviſible, unſearchable Wiſdom. And when he carries his Sight farther by the Help of Microſcopes, and penetrates a little deeper than the mere Surface of Things, ſo as to ſee ſomething of their internal Structures and Conſtitution, he will ſtill diſcover more and more Wonders *in Infinitum*, and be more and more charmed and delighted with new Beauty, Order, and Proportion. And then, the Contemplation of the vaſt

expanded

expanded Heavens about him, of the numberleſs and vaſt Globes, or celeſtial Bodies, which here revolve about their proper Centers, and act upon each other, by the moſt exact, conſtant, and uniform Laws of Order, Proportion, and divine Geometry; this, I ſay, muſt ſtill enlarge the Views, and heighten the Pleaſure of our Moral Philoſopher, and at the ſame Time increaſe his Thirſt, and ſtrengthen his Deſire after more and more of theſe intellectual Delights. And when he has been thus charm'd with this intellectual Beauty, and felt the inlightening, invigorating Influences of Wiſdom upon his Soul, he will deſpiſe all the inferior, groſs, and brutal Pleaſures of the idly buſy, and diſtracted World, and will find, by Experience, that Wiſdom owns and juſtifies her Children, and makes a much better Proviſion for their Happineſs, than any of the low, groveling Slaves to Ambition, Senſe and Appetite can boaſt of. But beſides, this Study, and ſuch Contemplations as theſe, muſt neceſſarily carry our Moraliſt higher, to the Origin, prime Agent, and univerſal Cauſe of all this; for when he ſees that the whole Univerſe is one intire Piece, and one perfect Machine, in which every Part has a neceſſary Relation to, and Dependence upon the Whole, he muſt needs bethink himſelf of ſome common Architect, Contriver, and Director, or of ſome univerſal Power and A-

gency join'd with Intelligence, Wiſdom, and Contrivance, which at firſt deſign'd, projected, and effected the whole Syſtem, and which ſtill continues to inſpect, govern, and actuate the Whole. Unleſs a Man enters into this Thought, he cannot, in Reality, think at all; or at leaſt he cannot think in a Way that will bear Reaſoning, or that will enable him to prove or diſprove any Thing: For a Man may as well ſuppoſe himſelf to be independent, ſelf-exiſtent, and neceſſary, as any Thing within his Obſervation and View to be ſo. And therefore he muſt allow ſome one univerſal, ſelf-exiſtent, and independent Mind, indued with all Power and Knowledge, as firſt producing and ſtill governing and directing all Things; or elſe he may as well ſuppoſe himſelf, and every Thing elſe, to be eternal, neceſſarily exiſtent, and independent, without any one independent Cauſe, and Dirigent of Nature at all, *i. e.* that an univerſal Effect may be ſuppoſed without an univerſal Cauſe, that Unity of Deſign may be ſuppoſed without Unity of Judgment, or which is the ſame Thing, that every Thing may exiſt without any Cauſe or Reaſon at all; and this is the laſt Reſort of Atheiſts, who have either no Reaſon at all, or who dare not uſe it in Oppoſition to their carnal Intereſts and Pleaſures.

But I muſt here correct myſelf, and own, that there is a Character in Life, which cannot

not be confined to any certain Rules or Meaſures, either of Reaſon or Intereſt, Religion or Atheiſm: Some Men affect to be nothing ſteadily, but every Thing by Turns. Vainglory governs them; they aim at nothing but Victory, or the laſt Word in Debate; and if they can but obtain that, they are as great as they can be, or would ever deſire.

Sophronius is a Man, who has a Smattering of every Thing, but underſtands nothing: He has a tolerable good Memory, a little Judgment, a great deal of Vanity, but no Honeſty. *Sophronius* has no certain, ſettled Opinion of his own, but aſſumes all Opinions, and argues for and againſt every Thing, as Occaſion ſerves. He has, however, this ſettled Principle, to contradict every Body in Converſation, when he thinks he is not too much over-match'd, and cannot be much expoſed; by which, as he imagines, he maintains an Opinion of his Superiority, and ſecures to himſelf the moſt ſhining Character in the Club.

If you ſhould venture to give your Opinion about the Nature, Formation and Conſtitution of a Cheeſe-Cake, or a Black-Pudding, *Sophronius* would break in upon you, and endeavour to prove, by a fluent Harangue of Half an Hour, or more, as the Company would give Leave, that you are groſſly miſtaken, that you know nothing of the Matter, and that he has heard the moſt expert

expert and learned in that Way give a different Judgment. In ſhort, *Sophronius* is always ſure to contradict you, and almoſt as ſure to be in the Wrong; but when this happens, the moſt certain Thing of all is, that he will never own it. *Sophronius*, however, is a very genteel and well-bred Man, and will always thank you for yielding to him; but if you cannot do this, it is for Want of Manners, and *Sophronius* cannot be your Friend.

But to return from this Digreſſion to my Moral Philoſopher: When by the foregoing Reaſonings he comes to know himſelf, and the World about him, and to connect this univerſal Syſtem of Nature, with an univerſal Mind, as the all-wiſe and all-powerful Creator, Governor, and Dirigent of the Whole; he can hardly forbear addreſſing himſelf to him in ſome ſuch Manner as this. O thou eternal Reaſon, Father of Light, and immenſe Fountain of all Truth and Goodneſs; ſuffer me, with the deepeſt Humility and Awe, to apply to, and petition thee as my Maker, Informer, and Preſerver, from whom I have deriv'd this compound Being of Mind and organiz'd Matter, and upon whom I muſt neceſſarily depend for the Preſervation of it, or any farther Degrees of Perfection and Happineſs in Futurity. I could not have exiſted, or acted at firſt, or have been ever capable of knowing, or doing

ing any Thing at all, but by a Communication from the ſupreme, eternal, independent Mind, upon whom I muſt likewiſe equally and neceſſarily depend for the Continuation of this Exiſtence, and for all the poſſible, ſucceſſive Affections and Modifications of Being. I own, therefore, O Father of Spirits, this natural, neceſſary Dependence upon thy conſtant, univerſal Preſence, Power, and Agency. Take me under the conſtant, uninterrupted Protection and Care of thy divine Wiſdom, Benignity, and All-ſufficiency: Continue to irradiate my Underſtanding with the Beams of immutable, eternal Reaſon. Let this infallible Light from Heaven inform and teach me from Time to Time, and under all Circumſtances, how to govern and direct my inferior, animal Senſes, Appetites, and Paſſions; or if theſe ſhould occaſionally miſguide me, if I ſhould err from the Way of Truth, and wander in the Dark, inſtruct me by a fatherly Correction; let Pains or Sorrows fetch me home, and teach me Wiſdom; but leave me not to my inferior, animal Self. Suffer not Appetite and blind Impulſe to over-rule and direct me, but for ever bleſs me with the enlightening, felicitating Influences of thy benign Preſence, Power, and Love; ſo ſhall my Happineſs, O heavenly Father, be conterminate with my Exiſtence, and my whole Being an everlaſting Monument to thy Praiſe and Glory.

This

This ſeems to be the moſt natural Method of ſtudying Wiſdom, or moral Philoſophy, and the moſt rational Way of addreſſing God, and owning our Dependence on the ſupreme Being. But while a Man is acquiring this divine Science, and confirming himſelf in the Practice of it, he muſt take Care not to defeat his own Intention; he muſt call in his wandering Mind, and ſuffer himſelf to be ſometimes at home; he muſt curb, and reſtrain his irregular, exorbitant Deſires; he muſt deny his carnal Self, and bear off from any Buſineſs or Pleaſure, that would be inconſiſtent with his main End; and though a Man may poſſibly find this a little difficult at firſt, and attended with ſome Reluctancy, yet the Harveſt will abundantly repay the Labour, and he will never repent him of his Pains. If any one ſhould here aſk, how he may ſurmount theſe Difficulties, and obtain the End? I anſwer; that he muſt ſet about it, and reſolve upon it in the Method propoſed, whatever it may coſt him; without which he can never obtain the Knowledge and Practice of this, or any Thing elſe: But then, as I was ſaying, every Victory thus gain'd over the Appetites and Paſſions, yields the Mind an unſpeakable Pleaſure; and while a Man is thus laying in a Fund of Happineſs, and making Proviſion for all Futurity, he has his Account in his Hand, and pays nothing but for Value receiv'd; for abſtracting

ing from all farther Conſiderations, the wiſe, virtuous, and good Man, is certainly the rich, honourable, and happy Man in this World; he wants no Pleaſures worthy of his Nature, or that can turn him to any real Advantage: The Gratifications which he denies himſelf of are, perhaps, only momentary, or, at moſt, but very ſhort, and ſuch as could leave nothing behind them, but a laſting Sting, Remorſe, and Reproach, as the juſt Reward of abuſing Reaſon; in which a Man only arms all his Senſes, Appetites and Paſſions againſt himſelf, and creates more Devils within him, than there are in Hell. And this is a very great Piece of Wiſdom, no doubt. It is the peculiar Happineſs of *great Men*, and ſuch as is juſtly enough ſtiled the *Wiſdom of this World.* But a Student in this Philoſophy, ought to abſtract his Thoughts, as much as he can, from the deceiving Colourings, and outward gaudy Appearances of Wealth and Power, Luſt and Appetite, Ambition and Senſuality; he muſt withdraw himſelf, upon all proper Occaſions, from the Noiſe, Hurry, and Buſtle of the World about him, and retire into the ſilent Solitude of his own Mind, there to adviſe and conſult in all difficult Caſes with his cool impartial Reaſon. When a Man does this, he converſes with God; he derives Communications of Light and Knowledge from the eternal Father and Fountain of it; he receives

ceives Intelligence and Information from eternal Wiſdom, and hears the clear intelligible Voice of his Maker and Former ſpeaking to his ſilent, undiſturb'd, attentive Reaſon. But let a Man take any other Method for Information in Matters of Faith and Religion; let him ſeek it in Books among the Hiſtorians, Expoſitory Criticks and Sermonizers of this or any other Age, and he will meet with nothing but Confuſion and Diſtraction, a *Babel* of Faith and Religion, an infinite Number of different irreconcileable Opinions and contending Parties, in which the World has been darkened and inflamed by the charitable, uſeful Labours of the Learned. But might one not rather ſend Men to the Heavens and to the Earth, or eſpecially to the brute Creatures, to learn Reaſon, Virtue and Religion?

Theoph. I have heard you out, *Philalethes*, under this Head of Diſcourſe, not only with Patience, but, as I muſt own, with a great deal of Pleaſure. I ſee there is a Sort of Enthuſiaſm, which you not only allow, but naturally run into, and cannot help it. But, before this Argument can come to be more thoroughly and impartially conſidered and weighed, there is one Account which I would willingly adjuſt with you, and that is with relation to the *Chriſtian Clergy:* You give them no Quarter; you rally them indiſcriminately; nay, you are often pleaſed to go

out

out of your Way to come at them. But what ſhould be the Meaning of this? Is the very Order eſſentially wrong, or do you think all Clergymen to be Fools or Knaves alike? I have the Honour to know many of them, and of different Denominations, whom I take to be very honeſt and learned Men, and who are as much againſt all Prieſtcraft, Church Tyranny, and implicit Faith, as you can be. You ought, therefore, to make theſe Gentlemen, as well as the reſt of Mankind, ſome Allowances, unleſs you think, that they are all naturally, or in Virtue of their Office, at leaſt, biaſſed againſt Truth and Religion, and that the Character itſelf ought not to be ſupported or maintain'd.

Philal. I agree with you in Opinion about the Clergy of different Denominations; my Acquaintance among them has, perhaps, been more extenſive than yours; and, therefore, I muſt at leaſt have met with as many wiſe and honeſt Men of this Function and Character. And I can aſſure you, that I am far from thinking that the Character itſelf has any Thing in it inconſiſtent with Reaſon or Religion. But this I think, and muſt ſay, that it is a more difficult Thing for a Clergyman to be wiſe and honeſt, than for any other Man to be ſo; and, therefore, I have always look'd with the greateſt Compaſſion upon the wiſe and honeſt Part of the Clergy,

gy, and think they are under greater Difficulties, in this Caſe, than any other Set of Men. The wiſeſt and beſt Men among the Clergy of every Denomination, are under the greateſt Difficulties and Diſcouragements in ſtudying the Scriptures, and in all their Theological Inquiries. Their ſeveral Schemes and Syſtems of Faith, have been long ago fix'd and ſettled to their Hands, by much wiſer and better Men; and they are not, under the greateſt Pains and Penalties, to underſtand the Scriptures in any other Senſe: For either national Eſtabliſhments, enforced by penal Laws and negative Diſcouragements, or at leaſt the Schemes and Syſtems of ſeparate, Diſſenting Parties, have pinn'd them down, and left them to think honeſtly, or talk freely at their Peril. Among the ſeparate, tolerated Parties, every grey-headed Dogmatiſt, and every well-inſtructed, catechized old Woman, can teach the Miniſter, or Paſtor of the Congregation, what Doctrines he is to preach, and how far he is to ſtudy, or in what Senſe he muſt underſtand the Scriptures. But the national, eſtabliſh'd Clergy, are every where upon much the beſt Foot of mechanical Faith, and hiſtorical Religion; ſince as they are happily exempted from all the Trouble of thinking, or reaſoning about the Truths contained either in Nature or Scripture, ſo they are not under the ſame Neceſſity of ſubmitting their Underſtandings

and

and Conſciences to any inferior Guidance from the weakeſt of the common People. And yet I take this laſt Caſe, hard as it is, to be better and more promiſing, than the former: For it may be barely poſſible to make People wiſer, who can gain nothing by their Ignorance or Folly; but it is morally impoſſible, and requires irreſiſtible Grace, to convert Men from their own Intereſt, or to make them believe, that Gain can ever be inconſiſtent with Godlineſs, or that Church Wealth and Power is not true Religion. It is hardly poſſible to forbear laughing at the ſeeming, diſſembled Zeal of the Clergy in general, for Rites, Ceremonies, hiſtorical Faith, poſitive Laws, and the deciſive Judgments of the Learned, or the Powerful, in Matters of Religion; and yet, when you come to reflect a little, and conſider the Matter, there is nothing in it. You might at firſt imagine, that they had nothing more at Heart than Religion, and that they thought the external, ritual Part of it the main Thing; but you would miſtake theſe Gentlemen very much, if you ſhould think them in earneſt: No, Sir; they all know better, whatever you may think or believe; for there is not one in ten of them, but would prefer a good Sine-Cure to a Living of the ſame Value, encumbered with Rites, Ceremonies, and Services, or clogg'd with the Care of Souls.

I would appeal to the Clergy themſelves, eſpecially to thoſe of them who are the moſt zealous for Rites, Ceremonies, and Party Schemes, whether this be not true. I would aſk them a Queſtion now, which they muſt expect to be examin'd upon another Day, if they believe any Thing of what they preach; and which is this, Whether they ever mean any Thing by the *Church*, which has been ſo often in *Danger*, but their own ſeparate, ſecular Wealth and Power, which has been always dangerous, and very often deſtructive to States and Kingdoms? Let them lay their Hands upon their Hearts, and tell me conſcienciouſly, and in the Fear of God, whether this be ſo or not. If, therefore, *Deiſm*, or the *Religion of God* and *Nature*, ſhould now at laſt prevail; if the Laity ſhould begin to laugh at, and deſpiſe what the Clergy have hitherto call'd *divine Faith*, and upon which they have grounded all their Anathema's and damnatory Creeds, to the diſtracting of Mankind, and ſetting the World about them on fire; they themſelves are to look to it, ſince they alone muſt have the Praiſe or Blame of it, as the Matter ſhould chance to turn up: But Thanks be to Heaven, that I have liv'd to ſee the Time, even in *Chriſtendom*, when the Laity in general have no great Courage or Reſolution left for theſe *religious Wars*, in which their diſintereſted Leaders have always

ways engaged them with Raſhneſs and Precipitation, but never brought them off with Honour or Safety.

Theoph. I think, upon the Whole, that you ought to diſtinguiſh between *Prieſtcraft* and *Prieſthood*, and not to deſtroy a good Thing becauſe you do not like a bad one.

Philal. Sir, I do diſtinguiſh between theſe; but the only Queſtion is, How to ſeparate or divide them, and to take Prieſts off from Prieſtcraft? How can you expect Truth, fair Reaſonings, and impartial Judgment, from the Clergy of any Denomination, while their Intereſt lies on the other Side? I am not ſetting aſide the Order itſelf, either here or elſewhere, nor ſhould I ever propoſe or aim at it, was it ever ſo much in my Power; but I would have you conſider with me, how to prevent the ill Conſequences which have hitherto, and always will attend it, without ſome effectual Remedy; and this, let me tell you, muſt be a Remedy proportioned to the Diſeaſe, and not any of the palliative Methods hitherto thought of and attempted.

Theoph. You think, then, perhaps, that the Sore is rankled ſo deep, and the Gangrene got ſo far, that nothing can be effectual but Amputation.

Philal. This is the laſt Reſort, indeed, and the only Way of preſerving the Whole in deſperate Caſes; but I would hope, that

ſome eaſier and gentler Method might be thought of; for I would not part with ſo neceſſary a Function, and ſo uſeful a Member of the Body Politick as the Church. In ſhort, therefore, I think that the State ought not to deſtroy, but to govern the Church, and keep the Biſhops, and their Clergy, ſo far under Subjection, as never to ſtand in fear of them. A political Church, in every Nation where there is one, can be only a State Machine, or Engine of Civil Government. It is, therefore, the higheſt Arrogance and Inſolence in the Clergy to claim an apoſtolical or divine Right, for any ſuch *political Creature* or *Ordinance of Man.* And to ſay, that Laws made for the Benefit of the *Church*, or *Clergy*, are unalterable, and that it muſt be dangerous to the State to diminiſh, or reſtrain this Eccleſiaſtical Fund of Wealth and Power, is the greateſt Inſult upon Reaſon and common Senſe of any in the World, as it is contrary to the conſtant, univerſal Experience of Mankind. Nothing has ever more endangered, or oftener ruin'd States and Kingdoms, than the *Power* of the *Church.* The Church and State are two ſuch antagoniſt Forces, or counter Powers, that like the oppoſite Arms of a Balance, the one always riſes proportionally as the other ſinks. If this Obſervation does not hold good in all Ages and Countries, from the Beginning of the World to this Day, I ſhould be gald to be

be convicted and better inform'd: But eſpecially, I ſhould be infinitely pleaſed to receive any farther Light and Inſtruction from the Chriſtian Clergy, who are moſt of all concern'd to acquit themſelves in this Particular, as having, more than any others, divided, weakened, and embroil'd the ſeveral States and Kingdoms, to which they have belong'd, and where ever they have obtain'd any conſiderable Quantity and Proportion of Wealth and Power.

It is, indeed, very fit and reaſonable, that they who preach the Goſpel ſhould live of the Goſpel, *quam diu ſe bene geſſerint*, or as long as they behave well, adorn their holy Function, and anſwer the Ends of their miniſterial Office, by promoting Peace, Unity, and Charity in the World, upon the Foot of Reaſon and Virtue, which is the Religion of God and Nature; and whether or no, or how far they do this, the Chriſtian People, who entruſt them with the Care of their Souls, are the true and only Judges; and this Chriſtian and natural Right of Judgment, I will venture to pronounce original and divine.

Theoph. You have opened yourſelf ſo far about the Chriſtian Clergy, that I am almoſt of your Mind, tho' I cannot agree with you concerning Chriſtianity itſelf. I know, indeed, no governing Power among Men but Civil Power, and which, I think, ought al-

ways to be in the Hands of the Civil Magiſtrate, and that this Power, which is every where the ſame, ought never to be divided under the ſenſeleſs and unintelligible Diſtinction of Civil and Eccleſiaſtical Power; if a Government ſhould think fit to entruſt Eccleſiaſticks, or Clergymen, with Civil Power, I ſhould have no Objection againſt this, provided the Perſons thus entruſted were equally honeſt and capable, and employ'd their Civil Power only to Civil Ends and Purpoſes.

Philal. You ſay right; but have you ever known the Church entruſted with Civil Power, which ſhe has not employ'd to ſeparate Church Uſes, and directed it to ſuch Ends and Purpoſes as relate more to the ſeparated, divided, or independent Intereſt of the Clergy, than to the common Good of the whole Community?

Theoph. Your Queſtion, I muſt own, is very home, and I cannot ſay, that I have ever known or heard of any ſuch Thing. It is very plain, that the Intereſt of the *Church*, or Clergy, has not been the Intereſt of the *State*; and if it ſhould ſometimes happen ſo, it can be only by Chance, and not from any neceſſary Connexion. There can be no Occaſion, therefore, to diſpute a Thing farther, in which we are both agreed; but ſtill the Queſtion is, not what the Clergy are, or have been, but what they ought to be, and whether

ther they can now preach or juſtify Chriſtianity upon your Scheme of it?

Philal. This would only introduce a *Lis de Nomine*; if the Clergy mean the ſame Thing by Chriſtianity, or the Doctrine of Chriſt, that I do, they will be able to juſtify it upon my Scheme; but if they mean any other, or different Religion, perhaps they may not be able to defend it, either upon my Principles or their own. By Chriſtianity, I mean that complete Syſtem of moral Truth and Righteouſneſs, Juſtice and Charity, which, as the beſt Tranſcript of the Religion of Nature, was preach'd to the World by Chriſt and the Apoſtles, as the Rule of Equity and Rectitude, by which Men were to be rewarded or puniſhed in the final Judgment by God himſelf, as the moſt powerful, wiſe, and righteous Creator, Governor, and Judge of the World. This I take to be original, real, and indiſputable Chriſtianity; the great and peculiar Excellency of which lies in this, that it reſtores the eternal, immutable Rule of moral Rectitude, or the Religion of God and Nature, after it had been darken'd, confounded, and almoſt loſt amidſt the groſs Ignorance, Idolatry, and Superſtition of Mankind in general, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*. But then I cannot think it of equal Importance and Neceſſity, to believe every Thing that was afterwards reported concerning this great Prophet, who had newly reviv'd and

publiſh'd the original and only true Religion: But his Diſciples and Followers ſoon fell into very odd Notions about him, and reported ſeveral Things of him, that were neither conſiſtent with his Character and general Deſign, nor with the Religion which he had preach'd and propagated. They interpolated, added, and altered ſeveral Paſſages in the original Books, which ſeem'd to repreſent this Prophet as the ſame Perſon, or the ſame Being with the ſupreme God; and they aſcribed ſeveral Miracles to him, in which there could have been only an Exertion of Power, without Wiſdom or Goodneſs. In ſhort, they ſoon patch'd up a Religion very different from that of Nature, join'd *Judaiſm* and *Chriſtianity* together, and in Favour of their old, national Prejudices, made Chriſt himſelf a falſe Prophet. They made him propheſy of the End of the World, and of his ſecond Coming to Judgment, as a Thing very ſhortly to happen during that preſent Generation. In a Word, they underſtood and reported every Thing that he ſaid, according to their own Prejudices and falſe Opinions concerning the Meſſias; and having waited for near a Century, and found themſelves miſtaken, they ſet up another Meſſias. One *Barchochab*, ſtopt all their Converſions to Chriſtianity, and raiſed a freſh Rebellion againſt the *Romans*, which prov'd the final Diſſolution of their State and Nation. If we conſider,

therefore, by whom and upon what Principles the Canon of Scripture, as we now have it, was at firſt collected, revis'd, and publiſhed, it is no Wonder if it leans ſtrongly towards *Judaiſm*, and ſeems, at firſt Sight, to connect two oppoſite and contradictory Religions one with another; for no two Religions in the World can be more inconſiſtent and irreconcileable, than *Judaiſm* and *Chriſtianity*; and yet if a Man reads the *New Teſtament* as a plain, hiſtorical, and uncorrupted Account of Things, without any critical Remarks upon the State of Religion, and the Circumſtances of that Time, he might be tempted to imagine, that *Judaiſm* and *Chriſtianity* are both one and the ſame Religion, or at leaſt have a neceſſary Dependence on, and Connexion with each other; for no *Jew*, at that Time, would ever have embraced the Religion of Jeſus, but upon the old Foundation of the Prophets, that the Meſſias ſhould reſtore the Kingdom of *Iſrael* to the Houſe of *David*, in an everlaſting Succeſſion of Power and Dominion over all Nations, to the End of the World. And, therefore, when he was crucify'd and put to Death, and all their Hopes were cut off, of his *reſtoring the Kingdom* at that Time, they expected his ſecond Coming in that very Age or Generation, with all the Powers of Heaven to effect this. And this is plainly what the Angel is ſaid to have promiſed to the Virgin, and which has certainly

certainly never yet been made good, and in all Probability never will be; and as the *Jews* at firſt embraced the Religion of Jeſus upon this Principle, and could never have receiv'd it upon any other, ſo Chriſtianity itſelf could never have been propagated beyond the Boundaries of *Judea*, or the *Jeruſalem* Dialect of the *Syriac* Tongue, had it not been for St. *Paul*, who had much greater Learning, and proceeded upon more Catholick Principles, than all the reſt. The Books of the *New Teſtament*, therefore, ought to be read critically, with an Allowance for Perſons, Circumſtances, and the Situation of Things at that Time; and not taken in groſs, as if every Thing contain'd in them had been at firſt infallibly inſpired from God, and no Corruptions could have ever ſince happen'd to them. But, in ſhort, what has been obſerv'd, is, perhaps, ſufficient to ſhew the Neceſſity of diſtinguiſhing between the *moral* and *poſitive* Parts of Chriſtianity; the one could never have been corrupted and altered, but the Cheat muſt have appear'd to the common Senſe and Reaſon of Mankind: But as the other might eaſily be miſtaken or miſrepreſented at firſt, ſo it is ſtill capable of almoſt any Conſtruction or Interpretation, according to Mens different Intereſts, Paſſions, and preconceiv'd Opinions; and accordingly we find, that this has been actually the Caſe, and that to this Day there are not any two Sects, or

Parties, who can agree about any one Syſtem, or Scheme, of what they call poſitive, inſtituted Religion, or the Religion of the Means, while yet they are all agreed about the End itſelf. But to reſt the eternal Salvation of Mankind upon ſuch a Bottom as this, is to make it either abſolutely unattainable, or at leaſt very uncertain and precarious upon the Chriſtian Scheme. We have all found, *Theophanes*, the blind, furious Zealots of all Parties, in contending for what they call Revelation, very free with their mutual Curſes, Excommunications, and Anathema's, and continually laying about them, with all the Powers of eternal Death and Damnation, upon one another: But herein, by an Inſolence not to be parallel'd in any other Caſe, they only ſanctify and ſpiritualize their own Intereſts and Paſſions with the holy Name of God, and a moſt profane and ſenſeleſs Pretence of Religion; for I would challenge all, or any of them, to name me any one ſingle Point of Inſpiration, or mere Revelation, in which they are agreed, or which they do not differently underſtand and interpret, as much as any two different and contrary Doctrines in the World. But while Men are contending eternally about Things neceſſary and fundamental, by poſitive Inſtitution, which they all own to be very plain and clear in Scripture, it is evident, whatever they may pretend to the contrary, that they have no certain

Rule

Rule or Standard of Faith at all in these Matters, and that every Church or Society, and perhaps every private Man, must in this Way be left to make their own instituted Fundamentals for themselves; as in Effect they do, while they can never agree in the same Sense of Things, even where they use the same Words. And I may venture to say, that was this Matter once settled and agreed on, there could remain no farther Doubts or Disputes about Religion; and that the Point can never be settled, nor the religious Peace of Mankind ever established upon a rational Foundation, as long as the Necessity or Fundamentality of such mere positive Laws and Institutes shall be allow'd at all. Nothing, perhaps, of this Sort has been more generally receiv'd and adher'd to, than the Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction, or the Necessity of his Death, as a Propitiation for Sin, and the principal Ground of our Acceptance with God; and yet, I think, I have said enough to subvert and destroy this Hypothesis, under all the Appearances and Constructions of it, among our several Schematists and Faith-Mongers. And if this will not hold, I should be glad to try their Strength upon any Thing else of the same Nature and Kind.

Theoph. I hope you have now almost talk'd yourself out, or at least you have furnish'd me with Matter enough for farther Consideration. I cannot, upon the Whole, own myself

ſelf convinced; but I muſt own, that you have offered may Things, which I had not duly weigh'd, and which will be the Subject of my cloſer and more retired Thoughts, as Opportunities ſhall offer. I had told you before, that I was not ſufficiently provided for ſuch a Debate, eſpecially in the Length to which you have carry'd it. And, therefore, if you ſhould ever think fit to publiſh what has paſs'd between us, our Readers ought not to conclude, that my Objections contain the whole Strength of the Argument againſt you. You will, doubtleſs, meet with much abler Adverſaries than myſelf, and to theſe I muſt refer you, or at leaſt beg your Diſmiſſion at preſent, to a more convenient Seaſon.

Philal. I ſee I have already treſpaſſed on your Patience, and therefore am willing to relieve you at preſent; but otherwiſe this Subject had not been half brought to a Concluſion; for it would remain ſtill to conſider the Civil and Eccleſiaſtical State and Conſtitution of the *Jewiſh* Nation, or People of *Iſrael*, as firſt ſettled and eſtabliſhed by *Moſes*: What political Principles that Legiſlator acted upon; and what their natural Conſequences were from firſt to laſt: What Powers, Prerogatives, and Immunities the High Prieſt, Chief Prieſts, and *Levites* had by Law; and what Uſe they made of them: How their firſt grand prieſtly Oracle, by *Urim* and *Thummim*, came to be ſet up, and his oracular Anſwers

Anſwers receiv'd as the infallible Voice of God; and by what Means, or from what Occaſions this Oracle afterwards fell into Diſgrace, and was ſet aſide: Upon what Principles and Views the School of *Naioth* was ſet up by *Samuel*, Father and Founder of theſe Academick Prophets; what were the principal Maxims, Studies, and Way of Living, to be obſerv'd and follow'd by ſuch as were taken in upon this Foundation; and what Uſe they made of it among the People: By what Means, or from what Occaſions, this Order of Prophets came at laſt to be rejected and caſt off, after they had maintain'd their Authority and Reputation with the People for almoſt 700 Years; wherein the Principles, Maxims, and State Policy of the Prieſts and Prophets agreed or differed; and what Convulſions and Revolutions of the State hereupon happened from Time to Time: In what Reſpects theſe Prophets, in their original Inſtitution and Foundation, were intended as a Check upon the Regal Power; and by what Means they afterwards deſtroyed that Power, enſlaved their Country, and were ſet aſide, and diſſolv'd themſelves: From what Occaſions, and by what Incidents, that great Change in Religion was introduced among the *Jews*, by which they quitted their Idolatry, and embraced the Doctrines of the Immortality of the Soul, the Reſurrection of the Body, a final Judgment, and a future State of Rewards and

and Punishments for good and bad Men. After the *Jews* had receiv'd these Doctrines from the *Persian Magians*, they never relaps'd into Idolatry more, but suffer'd Martyrdom for their Religion, with the same Constancy, Zeal, and Firmness that the Christians have done since. From the Days of *Moses* to this Time, which was a Period of about 1100 Years, this whole Nation had been deistical Materialists, or *Sadducees*, as they were call'd afterwards, and had been never known to suffer any Thing for Religion, because they had no future Expectation that could make them amends for it. And here it might be easily prov'd, that the *Sadducees*, in the Days of Christ and the Apostles, were not a new or modern Sect lately sprung up among them, but the true Remains of the antient *Jews*, who stuck to the Principles of their great Lawgiver *Moses*, as contain'd in the *Pentateuch*, and would not own the Authority of any Prophets after him; in Consequence of which they own'd the Being of a God, and his providential Government of the World, but deny'd the Immortality of the Soul, the Resurrection, or any future State. And here it might also be consider'd, upon what Views and Motives the *Jews*, about the Time of the *Maccabees*, so grossly corrupted and interpolated all their Books, which had been written after the *Babylonish* Captivity, cutting off at least 140 Years

Years under the *Perſian* Monarchy, thereby confounding all Hiſtory and Chronology during that Period, and placing many of their famous Men ſo much higher or earlier, than the Age in which they really lived and flouriſhed; ſuch as the Prophets *Daniel* and *Eſdras*, *Ezra*, the Scribes *Nehemiah*, *Mordecai*, and others. It might be eaſily prov'd, that this was really true in Fact, and that it could not have been done from Ignorance, Inadvertency, or Overſight. Such Inquiries as theſe, with other incidental Matters, that would naturally fall under Conſideration, might open us into a large Field of entertaining and uſeful Speculations. But as this Debate muſt now break off, what remains may, perhaps, be at ſome Time hereafter the Subject of another Conference between us.

Theoph. I muſt own, that many Things you have here hinted at, appear very novel and ſurprizing to me; but how well you can make them out, muſt be left to the Event in Time. However, I can now only ſtay to dine with you, and then muſt preſently take Horſe, ſince the Journey, you know, will require the greater Part of the Afternoon.

Philal. I can by no Means conſent to your Motion of going home to Day; and to prevent it as much as poſſible, I have engaged two of my Friends to dine and ſpend their Evening with us; in whoſe Converſation I doubt not but you will be highly delighted.

One

One of them is *Agricola*, a Country Farmer about a Mile off. He farms two hundred a Year of his own Eſtate, and rents above two hundred more. He is a Man of plain, natural, honeſt Senſe, who has never had his Mind corrupted and tainted with School Divinity, Church Schemes, or any Sort of falſe Learning; a ſober, virtuous Free-Thinker, and a Perſon perfectly well form'd for Friendſhip and good Neighbourhood, without any Thing of Stiffneſs or Formality about him.

The other is *Euſebius*, the Rector of our Pariſh. His Place is worth to him about one hundred and fifty Pounds a Year, upon which he is a very good OEconomiſt, and remarkable for his Charity to the Poor. He lives in a perfect Harmony, and good Underſtanding with his Pariſhioners; and there is not a Man among them, but would rather give him two Tithe Sheaves, than cheat him of one. He is a Gentleman of a graceful Preſence, and good Addreſs, with a ready Wit, and lively Imagination. He has a Fund of ſolid Learning, without Pedantry or Oſtentation; Religion, without Superſtition; and Catholiciſm free from Party Intereſt, or any of the common Foibles of his Order. In ſhort, he has all the perſonal Qualifications, which are neceſſary to render the Converſation of a Clergyman both entertaining and inſtructive. This, Sir, will be your Company, and therefore you muſt not, and cannot think of leav-

ing us till To-Morrow; but ſee, *Theophanes*, here they are juſt entering at the Gate-Houſe, and for my own Part, I know no greater Pleaſure, than what I expect for the Remainder of this Day. But I muſt go and receive them, and ſhall venture to bid them welcome in your Name, as well as my own.

INDEX.

INDEX.

A.

ABRAHAM, the Caſe of his being commanded to offer up his Son 133
Abrahamick Covenant, the *Iſraelites* groſs Miſtake about it 258. And that of ſome Chriſtians 259
Abrahamick Religion 349
Agricola's Character 449
Ahab, why an Enemy to the Prophets 311, 312
Allegorical Senſe of the Law and the Prophets, whether any Foundation for it 32, 37, 43. When firſt introduc'd 44, 45. How it came about 49. St. *Paul*, in uſing it, argues with the *Jews ad hominem* 50, 52
Amalekites, their Caſe 270, 298
Angels, their Apoſtaſy 231. How they ſeduc'd Men 233
Antichriſt began in the Apoſtles Time 382. A Deſcription of it 382, 383, 384, 389, 390
Antinomians Scheme of Satisfaction, an entire conſiſtent Scheme of Falſhood 157, 158
Apocalypſe, Judaizing Doctrines in that Book 364, 368. The prophetick Part of it objected to 370. It confines Salvation to the *Jews* only 372
Arminians, their Scheme of Satisfaction a Compoſition of Truth and Falſhood 158, 221
Atheiſm and Enthuſiaſm compar'd 219. Two oppoſite Sorts of religious Lunacy 220
Atonement under the Law 124. Such Expreſſions us'd in the New Teſtament metaphorically 163, 164

B.

BAPTISM, its Riſe from the *Jewiſh* Baptiſm of Proſelytes 105. No Baptiſm now but among the Baptiſts 101. And they too miſtaken about it 111
Believing Doctrines in different Senſes, is believing different Doctrines about the ſame Thing 18
Benjamites, Caſe of their Slaughter 140, 273, 277
Biſhops, their worldly Views before the Empire became Chriſtian 385

Blood, the Method of Atonement by it conſider'd 124. St. *Paul* uſes ſuch Expreſſions of the Blood of Chriſt metaphorically, and the Reaſon of it 163, 164

C.

CALVINISTS, their Doctrine of Juſtification cenſur'd 217. Their other abſurd Doctrines 218
Captivity of the ten Tribes 319. Of *Judah* 322
Canaan, of the Conqueſt of it 269, 270
Canon of Scripture 441
Catholicks, of the Antient ones 379, 380. How they treated thoſe who diſſented from them 381. Their Character of them not to be depended upon 386, 387. They fall out among themſelves 398. They eſtabliſh Popery 399
Ceremonial Law, whether a divine Inſtitution 23, 29, 32, 40, 51. Whether any Foundation for the typical, allegorical Senſe of it 32, 37, 43. When ſuch a Senſe was firſt introduc'd 44, 45. How it came about 49. This Law might be ſet aſide without any new Revelation 51
Chriſt, what he did and ſuffer'd was upon his own Account 153, 154. He ſeems himſelf to have no Notion of the Neceſſity of his Death as an Atonement 154, 155. How he may be ſaid to die for us 164. The true Ends and Reaſons of his Death 165 to 179. How he excell'd all other Lawgivers and Moraliſts 167. He did not die to make it reaſonable for God to pardon Sin upon Repentance 214. True Notion of his being a propitiatory Sacrifice 225, 227. His Death not penal 225. How we may be ſaid to be ſav'd and juſtify'd by him 228, 229. The *Jewiſh* Rabble's Reaſon for crucifying him 325, 350. The High Prieſts and Rulers Reaſons for it 326, 351. Of his being the Meſſiah 349, 350. His wiſe Conduct during his Miniſtry 375
Chriſtianity, whether contain'd in the Old Teſtament 19. What is true Chriſtianity 96. Difference between it and Judaiſm 359. A Chriſtian Deiſt's farther Account of it 392, 412, 439. It was ſoon corrupted 396, 440. The Progreſs of that Corruption 397, *&c.*
Chriſtians diſagree in the moſt important Points of Revelation 16, 95, 443
Church, the Difficulties thinking Men labour under about going to it 114, 115, 116. What the Clergy mean by it 434. Danger of its Power 436
Civil Power ought to be the only governing Power 437, 438
Clergy, two Sorts of 101. Whether they are, of Right, the ſole Diſpenſers of the Sacraments 104. Their Caſe conſider'd 431. They ought to be govern'd by the State 436

INDEX.

Clerical Religion. See Political
Cold Bathing, why enjoin'd upon the *Jews* 109. Its ſalutary Effects 110
Communion, Chriſtian 410
Contemplation of Nature, the Buſineſs of the Moral Philoſopher 422
Covenant of Redemption, a modern Invention 222
Creed, the firſt, pure, apoſtolick one 395
Criticiſm, true and falſe 162

D.

DANIEL's Weeks conſider'd 337, *&c.* *David*, of his Dancing before the Lord 21, 22. Falſe Notions of the Perpetuity of his Kingdom 260. How he came to be King 299. His Character 334
Decree of the *Jeruſalem* Council 55, 76. St. *Paul* not ſatisfy'd with it 56, 57, 77, 361, 362
Deiſm, its Growth 14
Divine Faith, there can be none upon human Teſtimony 82, 84
Doctrines coming from God, but one certain Evidence of them, the different Ways of conveying them to the Mind 85, 86
Doctrines, monſtrous ones taught by the firſt Reformers 404, 405, 406

E.

EGYPT, enſlav'd by *Joſeph*, and the Prieſthood made independent by him 239, 240, Was the Miſtreſs of Idolatry, and Seat of Prieſtcraft 241, 242
Eliſha, his Management with *Hazael* 306. He anoints *Jehu* King 316
Enthuſiaſm begets Atheiſm 219
Eternal Torments, contrary to Scripture and Reaſon 400, 401
Euchariſt, its Original 106. No Church Inſtitution 107. The preſent Uſages in it very different from the primitive 107, 108
Euſebius's Character 449
Extreme Unction 204
Ezra, the myſtical or allegorical Interpretation of the Law and the Prophets introduc'd in or about his Time 44, 45, 49

F.

FATALISM confuted 190, *&c.*
Feaſts, publick, obtain'd the Name of Sacrifices 237
Figurative Expreſſions in Scripture juſtify'd 161. Tho' they may occaſion Difficulties in Tranſlations 162
Firſt-born of the *Iſraelites*, the Caſe of God's reſerving them to himſelf 135, 137. Of their Redemption 139

Folly

Folly and Knavery, a Medium between them 266
Free Agency, Objections against it 181, 191. Answer'd 192
Free-Will Offerings under the Law 129

G.

GENTILE Christianity, very different from *Jewish* Christianity 377
Gentile Christians, how they came to unite with the *Jewish*, and the great Corruptions that follow'd 378, 379
God, how he governs the natural and moral World 186, &c. The Contemplation of him in his Works 423, 424. The Moral Philosopher's Address to him 426
Golden Calf 268
Grotius, his Mistake about vicarious Sacrifices 127

H.

HEATHEN Moralists, their great Deficiency 145, 167
Hereticks, the Account their Adversaries give of them not to be depended upon 386, 387. Justify'd in their Converse with the Heathen 388, 389
Historical Books of Religion 411
Human Sacrifices encourag'd and indulg'd under the Law 129, 131

J.

JABESH-Gilead, Case of 279
Idolatrous *Gentiles*, St. *Paul*'s first preaching to them 74
Idolatry, its Rise 233, 234, &c.
Jehu destroys *Ahab*'s House 317
Jephtha's Daughter, her Case 131, 132
Jeremiah persecuted by the *Jews* 290
Jeroboam, the Circumstances of his becoming King of *Israel* 308
Jews differ from the Christians in their Sense of the Old Testament 15. Put into a State of War with the rest of the World 28. Why cold Bathing was enjoin'd them 109. They were never reconcil'd to their Priesthood and Sacrifices 128, 129. Their Character after the Captivity 324. And in our Saviour's Time 325. After what Manner they receiv'd the Gospel 361
Jewish Christianity 361, 368, 369, 374
Jezabel, why an Enemy to the Prophets 313. Her Fate 317
Images, their Rise 236
Imputed Righteousness, its Absurdity 217, 219. See Righteousness
Inspiration and the Power of Miracles did not make Men infallible

fallible or impeccable 80. The Knowledge of any Truth convey'd by Inſpiration can go no farther upon divine Authority, than to the Perſon or Perſons ſo inſpir'd 82
Joſeph inſlaves *Egypt*, and makes the Prieſthood there independent 239, 240
Iſraelites Egyptianiz'd 247. Therefore govern'd in their own Way 248. Continu'd in the ſame blind State 254, 255. Their falſe Principles and groſs Errors 256. Their wrong Notions of God, *&c.* ibid. Their fancying themſelves to be God's peculiar People 257. The Revolt of the ten Tribes 261. The ſeveral Revolutions in the Tribe of *Judah* 262. Their Miſtake about the Prophecies 260, 263. See *Jews*
Judaiſm, whether figurative Chriſtianity 19. The Spirit of that Religion very different from the Chriſtian 359
Judaizers, how they corrupted Chriſtianity 364. Confin'd Salvation to themſelves 367
Juſtification, *Calviniſtical* Hypotheſis of 217

K.

KINGS of *Iſrael*, an hiſtorical Account of the Struggles between the Prophets and them 308, *&c.* What was the Wickedneſs charg'd on them 313, 314

L.

LAW, ceremonial. See Ceremonial
Law, moral, See Moral
Law of Nature, what 25
Levi, Tribe of, their Revenues and Proportion to the reſt of the People 128. They were protected againſt the Law 140
Levite and his Concubine, their Caſe 273, *&c.*
Liberty, probational 197
Lord's-Supper. See Euchariſt

M.

MAN, how firſt ſeduc'd 233
Means of Grace, mechanical ones of Religion 415
Merit and Demerit, perſonal, cannot be transferr'd from one to another 153, 154, 155, 223
Miracles, no Connexion between them and the Truth of Doctrines 98. The true Uſe of them ibid. and 99. The Danger of depending upon them 264. Of the Argument from them and the Accompliſhment of Prophecy in Matters of Religion 344, 345
Moral and poſitive Parts of Chriſtianity, Neceſſity of diſtinguiſhing between them 442

Moral Law of the *Jews*, how conſider'd by St. *Paul* 26. Reaſons of its Inſufficiency ibid
Moral Philoſopher, its Riſe from a Society of Gentlemen, *Pref.* p. vii. Principles agreed on by them viii, *&c.* The Moral Philoſopher deſcrib'd 418, *&c.* His Addreſs to the ſupreme Being 426. His happy Condition 428, 429
Moral Philoſophy call'd Wiſdom 418
Moſes, his Conduct towards the *Iſraelites*, and his Hiſtory interwove with poetical Embelliſhments 249, 250. The Abſurdity of underſtanding it otherwiſe 251. *Moſes* juſtify'd herein 254. The Difficulties he labour'd under in managing his People 268. Of his giving them the Law 271. Upon what Principles he and the Prophets govern'd them 272
Myſtery in Religion, nothing but Allegory literally applied 157

N.

NATURAL Religion, what, 25. Revelation neceſſary in Aid of it 144, 145
Natural and Moral World, how govern'd by God 186, *&c.*

O.

ORAL Tradition, when firſt ſet up 49

P.

PARDON, general, offer'd in the Goſpel to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, how far it extends 170. Of the Pardon of Sins committed after the Reception of the Goſpel 171, 175
Paſſions, how to be mov'd in Religion 413
Paul, St. his Conduct towards the *Jews* 21, 122. Three Acceptations of the Word *Law* in his Writings 24, *&c.* He contradicts *Moſes* with reſpect to the Ceremonial Law 41. Argues with the *Jews ad hominem* 50, 52. Submitted to the Law only in a civil or political Capacity 54. A farther Account of his Conduct in this Reſpect 55. Not ſatisfied with the Decree of the *Jeruſalem* Council 56, 57, 77. His Conduct about purifying himſelf in the Temple, *&c.* to appeaſe the *Jews* 59, 60. A Tumult againſt him notwithſtanding, and the Conſequences of it 61, *&c.* His Defence and Behaviour before *Feſtus* and *Agrippa* 65, *&c.* His Conduct juſtify'd 71. His firſt Preaching to the idolatrous *Gentiles* 74. The Conſequences of that Affair 75. The reſt of the Apoſtles ſeparate from him 79. His Education, and Behaviour before and after his Converſion 119, 120, *&c.* His prudential Conduct juſtify'd, in uſing figurative and metaphorical Expreſſions 163. The other Apoſtles

tles separate from him 363, 364. The Ground of his Conflicts with those of the Circumcision 376. He himself is *he that letteth* or hindereth, in his 2d Ep. to the *Thess.* 382
Perception and Judgment, Difference between them 193
Peter first preaches to the Proselytes of the Gate, and what follow'd thereupon 72. Reprov'd by St. *Paul* for his Dissimulation 363. Separates from him 364
Political or clerical Religion 94, 95, 96, 100. What it is 117
Popery, original State of 399
Positive Commands, of probable Evidence with regard to them 90, *&c.*
Positive Laws, if any Religion in them, it must consist in keeping close to the original Institution 110
Prayer, the Objections that some make against it 179. Answer'd 183
Priestcraft and Priesthood, Difficulty of separating them 435
Priests, their absolute Power under the *Mosaick* Law 141. Their Original 238. First made independent by *Joseph* 239. How they manag'd in *Egypt* afterwards 241
Prophecy, of Arguments from thence 332
Prophets, their Conduct 265, *&c.* 285, 286. Schools of them erected by *Samuel* 282. Of their Predictions 288, 289. Causes of their Interest losing Ground 304. Troublesome to the kingly Power 312, 313. Of Christ and the Apostles appealing to them 330, 331
Proselytes. See Baptism
Providence. See World

R.

Reconciliation, the common Notion of it, contrary to the Scriptural Notion 214, 215
Redemption by Christ consider'd 142, 143, *&c.* The true Notion of it 228
Reformation from Popery imperfect 403, 404
Reforming Divines spoke contemptibly of personal Holiness 216. Their monstrous Scheme of Doctrinals 404, 405
Religion, the Abuse of that Word 18. Whether any Distinction between it and Civil Law under the *Mosaick* Dispensation 32, 33, 39
Religion of Nature, what 25. Call'd Wisdom 418
Religion, two Sorts of it in the World 94. How to distinguish between true and false 198. Of the Religion of the End, and the Religion of the Means 201, 416, 419, 420
Religion, the true original State of it 230. How it came to be corrupted 231, 233
Resurrection, Doctrine of, believ'd before Christ's Time 348

Revelation, the great Disagreement about the most important Doctrines of it 15, 16. Which are therefore argu'd not to be necessary 17, 18
Revelation, its great Usefulness in Aid of human Reason, in the corrupt State of Mankind 144
Revelation, immediate. See Inspiration
Ridicule, when it may be us'd 20. It was us'd by the Prophets 21
Righteousness of Christ, why it cannot be plac'd to our Account 153, 154

S.

SACRAMENTS, Difference about them 96. Whether the Clergy ought to be the sole Dispensers of them 104. The Original of them, and that they were only temporary or occasional Things ibid. They were first perverted by mistaking a Passage in *John*'s Gospel 112. Not Christian Institutions 202, 203
Sacrifice, general Notion of 210. Scriptural Notion of Christ's Sacrifice examin'd 213, 223
Sacrifices under the Law, their Nature and Quality 124. In what Cases they were admitted 126. Wherein their chief Virtue was suppos'd to lie 127. By what Methods the People were kept easy under such a Dispensation 128
Sacrifices, what the first were 237
Sadducees, the true Remains of the antient *Jews* 447
Samuel institutes Schools of Prophets 282. Takes upon him the Priesthood, and is depos'd by *Saul* 294, 295. Upon which he projects his Ruin 295. Sends him against the *Amalekites* 298. Hews *Agag* in Pieces, and anoints *David* 299
Satisfaction, the great Absurdity of that Doctrine demonstrated 145, *&c.* And of the Doctrine of an Equivalent 148. Two Things alledg'd in Defence of these Doctrines confuted 151. Different Schemes of *Antinomians*, moderate *Calvinists* and *Arminians* about them 157, 158
Saul anointed King 292. How the Kingdom was renew'd to him 293, 294. *Samuel* set against him 295. Of his sacrificing 296
Sceptick, in the true Sense of the Word, what 355
Self-Acquaintance 421
Sermon on *Eph.* i. 7. 119, *&c.*
Sin unto Death, what 173, 174
Sin against the Holy Ghost, why unpardonable 173
Sincerity does not serve the Purpose of Orthodoxy 407, 408
Singularity, affected, to be avoided 205

Solomon's Seraglio and Alliances 300. He grants a Toleration of all Religions 301
Sophronius, his Character 425
Sprinkling no Baptiſm 109
Superſtition and Religion, how to diſtinguiſh between them 198
Synods and Councils 397

T.

TEMPORARY, occaſional Laws, their Nature 205
Terah, the Father of *Abraham*, the firſt Inventor of Image-Worſhip 236
Tertullian's Challenge 390
Theocracy, whether the *Jewiſh* Government was one 373
Toleration the Crime of the Kings of *Iſrael* 313
Tradition, or human Teſtimony 85. The Inſufficiency and Abſurdity of it in conveying poſitive Precepts, illuſtrated by a familiar Inſtance 88
Tranſlations, the Diſadvantages of thoſe who are oblig'd to read them 162
Truth in Reaſon, and Truth in Fact 344

V.

VICARIOUS Sacrifices, a great Miſtake 127, 224. No ſuch Thing could be meant by the Sacrifice of Chriſt in the *New Teſtament* 210. The Abſurdity of a vicarious Sacrifice and Obedience farther diſplay'd 244, 245
Vows, general and ſpecial, under the Law 130
Urim and Thummim, an Account of it 267, 268, 272

W.

WARS between *Iſrael* and *Judah* 320
Whiſton, Mr. cenſur'd in his Expoſition of the Apocalypſe 371
Wiſdom, Morality ſo call'd 418
World, how govern'd by God 136, *&c.*
Writers in Defence of Chriſtianity, one Part of their Conduct cenſur'd, *Pref.* p. v.

Z.

ZIMRI, his quick Vengeance upon the Houſe of *Baaſha*, 310. His Fate 311

FINIS.

DATE DUE

[redacted] 68			
GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.